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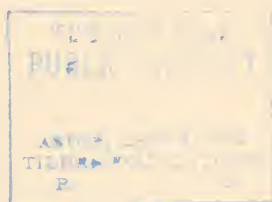
Gibbs, Mead

Honolulu

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Henry





"AUNT HITTIE CLOSED THE DOOR AFTER THEM AND
WATCHED FROM THE WINDOW."—PAGE 7.

BEFOREHAND.

A COMPANION VOLUME TO

"ONE MORE CHANCE."

BY

Sc
S. M. I. HENRY,

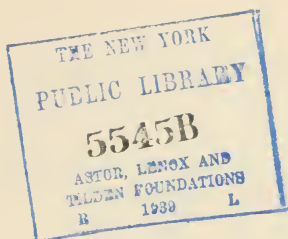
AUTHOR OF "THE PLEDGE AND THE CROSS," "THE VOICE OF THE HOME,"
"MAEL'S WORK," "ONE MORE CHANCE," "VICTORIA," "AFTER
THE TRUTH," "MARBLE CROSS," ETC., ETC.

NEW YORK :

The National Temperance Society and Publication House.

No. 58 READE STREET,

—
1888.



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THE NATIONAL TEMPERANCE SOCIETY AND PUBLICATION HOUSE.

PRESS OF
THE NATIONAL TEMPERANCE SOCIETY AND PUBLICATION HOUSE,
58 READE STREET, NEW YORK,

BEFOREHAND.

CHAPTER I.

A SNOW blockade has its mission. Clifton was enjoying such a means of grace. A heavy storm, with a strong, persistent wind, defied the efforts of locomotives, street cars or snow-plows to keep the world together. Every home was shut in with itself, and its own affairs, and obliged to become acquainted with itself, as not before in a decade. Neighbors were separated, friends excluded, mail and telegraph restricted, and business almost suspended. Christian work was folded up and put away for a time. One whole Sabbath the churches were not opened. Pastor Wadelle, of Memorial Church, spent the day in hallowed pleasures, with his lovely group of children; while Pastor Somerfield, of the old, aristocratic Waymarket Church, sat in gown and cap in his study, and smoked the air blue, taking an extra half hour at dinner, over his customary wine.

At Gracia Lodge, Annie Dayton was shut in with her six girls, who, beside poor Maggie Dwight, and helpful Fannie Mead, enjoyed the shelter of this working girls' home. At Elmwood Farm there had been held a solemn council, and protests had been entered by John Mark, William Dayton, and Aunt

Hittie, against Aunt Gracia's preparations for going out into the weather, while Uncle Benjamin sat smiling and waiting, not even wondering how it would end, for he knew. The horses were harnessed, the long sleigh filled with straw and robes, shawls were laid in handy, and all was ready for an early start.

"I should be ashamed to stay at home for a little snow, and let the devil have it all his own way to-day," was Aunt Gracia's reply to all objections. "Some of the men will be sure to be at the Hall, and I must not let them go away without anything to help them through."

"Not a church will open to-day," said William.

"All the more need of us. The W. C. T. U. is to step in, where, and whenever, others do not come up. It is ours to do the thing which no one else will do. If we fail in this, God has no use for us."

"All right! If you will go, I suppose we boys ought to go along and dig you out, if you get buried in the snow," said William Dayton, getting up, and beginning to put on his overshoes. "Come, John Mark, there's no rest for the wicked!"

"No rest from the wicked, either," interrupted Aunt Gracia, "any more than for them. It is because the wicked are so busy, that we who would do God's work, must not rest, only as we learn how to rest in the midst of labor, by leaning on Him."

The young men got into their overcoats and mittens, and followed Aunt Gracia into the sleigh, where, armed each with a shovel, they waited in deep admiration on the grand courage of the sweet-faced woman, and the loyal gray-haired lover and yoke-

fellow, who, never remonstrating, always ready, stood beside her in her work.

Aunt Hittie closed the door after them, and watched from the window as the horses sent the fine snow back in clouds, as they floundered out of the yard, into the road.

"Well," she murmured, "I hope the good-for-nothing fellows who come into Union Hall to get warm to-day, will appreciate it all; but they won't; nobody will. Gracia's just wearing herself and Benjamin out, and she won't get any thanks for it, either."

At the Graham cottage, Charles, and Hortense, and Clementine, passed the day together, in a way that made the child glad of the storm, and would fix its memory in her mind forever. The two little boys, Philip and Benny, absent from home with Grandmother Graham, in the old New England homestead, were not forgotten. Long letters from father and mother, and a little printed one from sister, were prepared and laid away to await the first mail out.

The Date house, just out of town, might have been labelled, "Bottled Irritation," a contention having arisen between Horace Date and his thirteen year old son, Llewellen.

At the Fletcher's, Bessie kept the cornpopper going, and made taffy out of the cheapest glucose for Sadie and Susie, to keep them quiet, so that the sick mother could endure them in the little room.

At the Griffins, there was stormy altercation because the frail mother was not able to restrain the reckless Henry from being quite as selfish and un-

principled in his pleasures as his father was in his business.

At the Brown's, father and mother sat silent, over books and papers, wondering why their Walter should be turning out so badly, after all they had done for him.

At the Monk's, the lightest of light literature, even bordering on the obscene, was lying on chairs and floor, within hand-reach of parents and children, lolling away the sacred hours.

At the European Hotel, a variety troupe made things merry, and kept Bridget McGuire busy, in the effort to find out how the blonde actress put up her hair, and made up her face into such charming grimaces; and how the elaborate dress of the dazzling brunette was constructed. Her heart burned within her to be both of these charming creatures in one.

In the prison, the crooked remains of Tom Dwight lay stretched out, on a bare board, waiting for a coffin; while in his room, Hollis Ellenwood sat writing to his mother, and dreaming of Annie Dayton.

At Lem's, all through the blockade, things went on after the old fashion. Somehow, Lem seemed even to grow fat, on that which made the rest of the world lean. There had come changes within these walls, changes, however, which seemed not to touch him, or his profits. New faces had taken the places of those that were seen no more, while a few old settlers still looked at each other from across the lunch and gaming-tables.

Among these latter, Walter Brown, Henry Griffin, and Chet Monk, were noticeable. They were nearly

always together, and were the observed of all loungers, because of their association with the famous trial of Tom Dwight. They enjoyed a notoriety which was in itself a mark of the low tide of morality that surged about them. But they were not entirely consoled by these tokens of distinction, for the misfortunes which had overtaken the "immortal seven." What with Clarence in the place to which his sins had brought him, Paul Dunwell and Bert Springer, with Hollis Ellenwood in the Church, Y. M. C. A. and temperance work, and Annie Dayton's House for the girls, they were in danger of being left very much to themselves; and had already begun to realize something of the loneliness of sin. They were likely to find, as many another beside poor Tom Dwight had done, that there is no isolation so desolate, no loneliness so heart-sickening, as that, which sooner or later, steals in upon every soul, that jostles through the crowded thoroughfare known as the Broadway.

During the Sabbath of the blockade, Brown and Griffin were sitting over a lunch, with beer, in the room where the roystering crowd had so often killed the time, of which there was none too much for the real life-work they had to do, when Monk came in. He was noisily greeted by the twain, but seemed wholly absorbed in the task of picking the ice from his mustache and beard, and flinging it into the grate. He stood unmoved by the fusilade of banter and quizzing, which was aimed at him, in the usual fashion, mingled with oaths, until he had dried his beard and warmed his hands; then, turning toward

them, he let fall one word which silenced them, for a moment, at least :

“Dead !”

The tone was solemn, almost sepulchral. He looked at the boys for a moment, and then with a nervous laugh, turned his back to them, standing with his hands behind him, facing the fire. They waited for explanations, but he seemed to have nothing more to say.

“Well !” said Walter Brown, at last, with an oath.

“What’s the row, Chet ?” asked Henry Griffin; “what are you monkeying that way about ?”

“He’s dead !”

“Who ?” cried both at once.

“Clare.”

“Clare ? Clarence, do you mean ?” asked Brown.

“Tom Dwight ?” asked Griffin.

“Wonder what name they’ll put on his mile stone ?” continued Chester Monk, giggling again in an almost hysterical way.

“Well, well !” said Walter Brown, leaning forward on his hand, “Clare dead ! I should think you’d laugh ! Say, fellows, it’ll be a silent world after this. I feel like getting out myself.”

“How’s that ?” said Henry Griffin. “What good could he do you in jail ? ’Twas next thing to the black hole.”

“Yes, ’course ; but I’ve always had hopes of his getting out and making things lively again : but death knocks that, you know ; no getting out o’ that.”

“’F he’d ’a got out,” remarked Chester Monk, still chuckling, “he’d always been blind, they say.”

"Blind!"

"And a cripple; he! he!"

"A cripple!"

"A poor, mean spirited cuss 's ever you saw, if all they tell's true. Ha! ha! ha!"

"No! How'd you come to know so much 'bout it. Who told?"

"Oh, I heard the soul doctor, 't lives out in the big boarding-house, talkin' to that there Aunt Gracia. Do you believe there ever was a storm bad enough to keep that woman in? Ha! ha! ha!"

"Not if she thought anybody needed her," said Walter Brown, with a touch of reverence in his tone.

There was a moment of silence, broken by an ejaculation from Brown, profane as to form, but reverent in tone and expression, followed by the exclamation:

"That woman's a Christian if one ever lived! I never see her without feeling that I am a sinner, and knowing that I may be good if I will."

Walter Brown had never heard that the followers of Him should be known by His name, and yet the same old truth fell naturally from his lips.

"That's awful 'bout Clare, dead! in prison! blind! cripple!" said Henry Griffin. "Stop your confounded giggling, Chet! Makes life look gloomy, and sours all the fun, like thunder 'n lightning does sweet milk."

"Thunder 'n lightning! Boys! I tell you I can't stand this any longer!" cried Brown.

"What?" asked Monk, with his knife blade between his teeth, "Clare's smash up? What's that to us?"

"It's a good deal to me, whatever 'tis to you," and Walter hung his hands between his knees and leaned dejectedly on his elbows. "I tell you we're comin' to where we get glimpses, once 'n a while, of what's before us fellows; and for my part I don't like the prospect. I'm going to light out."

"Oh, yes, you're going; you've been going to light out for the last month. Ha, ha! I think I see you, Hank; we've said good-by—how many times?"

"Oh, several, more or less. I've said my last."

"I too; so when you do go, you needn't expect anything further, by way of a send-off from us. You've stayed beyond your time a'ready!"

"All right, old pal; then when I come up missing, one of these days, you'll understand it."

"So well that we shall not need to inquire."

"So be it," said Walter; "and now, suppose I ask you to take one more drink all around, before we part."

"I shall say, 'with all my heart, old chum;' what 'll you say, Hank?"

"I shall say less, and drink more."

"Drink! I should say you did;" said Walter. "Hank, my boy, I'm afraid your going to rival your instructors in the gentlemanly art, and make us regret ever taking you in tow. Honestly, I should be sorry to see you get to—to where I am."

"Why don't you say on; you've got more where that came from, I know," said Chet Monk.

"You're right, I have, and I would like to say it, if 'twould do any good, but 'twont; so I'll keep still."

"How d'ye know 'twont?" asked Henry.

"Judge you by myself, that's all. Live and learn 's an old saw, but it cuts square to the line. I know what I would ha' done with anybody who'd 'a said to me the things I want to say to you, and I'll be excused, if you please."

"Now I am curious," said Henry. "Speak out."

Walter looked at him quizzically a moment, then said:

"Tell me where you've started for, Hank?"

"Where I've started for? What do you mean? Haven't started at all, yet 's I know of."

"Yes, you have; I mean figuratively speaking, of course. What kind of a place do you intend to fetch up in twenty, or ten years from now? What kind of a—of a—a—man did you set out to make?"

"Ha, ha! that's a good one!" laughed Chester Monk. "A preacher couldn't ha' asked it better."

"Well, I'm going to have an answer, now I've asked it," said Walter. "Say Hank, how is it? Did you set out to bring up in prison, and die and be buried, like poor Clare?"

"Course not! What do you take me for?"

"A big, green fool. 'Of course not!' nobody ever did. 'Going to escape myself! can't catch me!' That's what every last one of us thinks. Never was a bigger surprise party than when Tom Dwight came to himself, and found he was caught. And you—we all of us are on the road to the same place. I'm going to switch off, honest now, I am,—light out, and be missing. You better go 'long. I mind the time when you'd ha' been shocked to even

hear of the things that you do now, just as e-a-s-y as rolling off a log. You're going it fast; better stop, Hank. Come, old boy, let's do it together, get out o' Clifton, away among strangers, and begin new and all right."

"Ha! ha! Well; I declare to gracious! 'twouldn't do to swear in this presence, so I put it mildly," said Chester Monk, in a derisive tone. "I hadn't the least idea I was going to bring about a reformation, and possible conversion, when I came in with the news. When you get there, Walt, please tell the Lord 'twas I started it; maybe he'll set it down to my credit. Of course Hank 'll go with you, won't you, Hank? 'twon't do to send him off in the straight and narrow way alone."

"Guess he'll have to go 'thout me," said Henry. "I haven't time."

"That's so; you'll be in danger of losing your job."

"Exactly."

"And 'tis a job worth holding on to, eh, Hank?"

"You better believe it is."

"'S she going to the New Year dance?"

"Dunno yet; thinks she ha'n't nothing fit to wear, the goose! told it out frank 's a country milk maid. Old Fletcher, you know—look at the old coon over there—patronizes the tables in this den too liberally for Bessie's good. I told her, 'beauty unadorned was adorned the most,' you know. Ha, ha!"

"She took it, of course;" and Chet laughed loud and long.

"Of course she did: blushed like a rose, looked too tempting for anything!"

"Blushed ! well, that is sweet. Imagine Bridget doing that sort o' thing."

"I couldn't. Bridget McGuire blush ! Honestly, I shouldn't like to see Bess get to be like her ; 'twould spoil her for me."

'Twould ? Well, all I have to say then, is that you'd better go with Walt. You're a pair of you, you are."

"For my part," said Walter, speaking again very soberly, "I'd like to ask this Bessie Fletcher where she's started for."

"She'd be likely to tell you !" said Henry.

"Yes, but what does she expect ?"

"Oh, a home of her own one of these days, with a good boy to take care of her, and love her true."

"Yes ; but will she find that if she goes your way ?"

"Well !" sneered Henry, angrily, you must be a crank at last, Walt. You're a pretty fellow to be doing the Sunday School business like this. I expect, of course, to get married sometime, but the girl will not be Betsy Fletcher."

"Well, I'd like to tell her just what she'll come to if she goes your way. I'd like to show her Maggie Dwight's and Bell's graves, and—"

"Better introduce her to Fan Mead, and get her to help you. Gracia Lodge 'd be a good place to put her in."

"I wish she may escape you, Hen, and find as safe a shelter," said Walter ; "but as for me, I'm going to light out, so I can't warn her ; and you have taken my advice, just as I knew you would, and we're all fools together. Come, let's have a drink for the last time."

And it was for the last time.

CHAPTER II.

BEFORE we go on with our story we would like to read the letter which Hollis Ellenwood wrote to his mother.

“CLIFTON, *Jan.* 15, 18—.

“MY DEAR MOTHER: The snow lies in heaps; everything is blockaded. I have not heard a church bell this morning. I shall get out by-and-by, and go down to Union Hall, although I do not expect any one can get down from Elmwood, to hold a meeting. Some of the boys may venture out, and if they do I shall want to be there to keep them company, and help them if I can. You see I begin to class myself with the grand company of rescuers. And besides I have a little curiosity, which will be like snow-shoes to-day. I have heard it said that no storm has ever been so severe yet, as to prevent Aunt Gracia and Uncle Benjamin from coming to the Gospel meeting. And because of this fact, wind and weather have but little effect on the meeting. My experience so far corroborates this—but this storm is just a little different from anything we have ever had, I think, at least since the day of Gospel meetings,—so I am anxious to know how it will turn out.

“Our work has been going on grandly . . .

anxious about some of the boys. I know that if I had done as some of them are doing, I should have been back in the old sinful way, giving you and all my friends no end of trouble and sorrow, instead of being, as I hope, my dear mother, I am, a comfort to you. Paul Dunwell and Bert Springer somehow make me anxious. They do not come out completely from the old haunts; I do not mean the saloons:—but the same old restaurants—streets—fellows. I see them turning the same corners,—going past the same places. When I began my new life, I had to make a new map of the city for my own purpose. They may be stronger than I, or may not feel the same drawing of habit; I may be needlessly anxious, but I could not bear to have them fail, and I confess to you, what I would not even to Aunt Gracia, that I am anxious and fearful about them.

“This, with a few other things, makes me feel like leaving Clifton. I really think I shall go away and begin anew somewhere.

* * * *

“I fell to thinking, after I wrote this far, and time slipped by, so that it was time to start for the Hall before I knew it. So I had to leave my letter unfinished—for I went! And Aunt Gracia was there, with Uncle Benjamin, John Mark, and Mr. Will Dayton. They had a warm time getting through—took them over two hours to come the two miles. The boys had to make a road in some places: but it paid, I assure you:—us, if not them. I guess they felt paid too, from the way they enjoyed the meeting.

“The old usual crowd of men were there:—we

missed Charley Graham, however, who was detained at home with his family. One lot of rough fellows said they came just to get ahead of Aunt Gracia once. And it was real funny to see the glances and grimaces they exchanged, when she came in, looking like a June day. She had been in the Smither's sitting-room below, for an hour or more, of course, and came in without bonnet or wrap; just her white cap on her head. After a second of surprise, a perfect storm of applause broke out. She just threw a kind smiling look out of her eyes at us all, and announced the hymn :

‘From every stormy wind that blows.’

and then led the singing herself, for, of course, the choir of girls was not there. I was never in any meeting that did me so much good. I only wished Paul and Bert had been there, but they were not. In the course of the testimony meeting, one man said he had heard of the death of Tom Dwight in the prison. I could see that Aunt Gracia knew of it—and that not one of them could forget that he was “Clarence Hollister ;” but she made no remark about it. John Mead told me afterward that she had had a talk with the chaplain of the prison, and that there were hopeful things about him at last. Poor fellow ! —O, mother, how my heart goes out in gratitude to God, for the wonderful deliverance he gave me. What am I, that He should have had mercy on me ?

“But I must not let all the time for writing pass without doing the one thing which I made up my mind to, as I sat thinking this forenoon. I am going

to open my heart, and so get you to share my burden. Do you remember the talk we had about—my future—and—I don't know how to put it on paper—but you will remember, I am sure, the time when you discovered the secret that I was trying to hide from all the world. Now I am going to tell it all. Her name is familiar to you: it is no other than Annie Dayton: and in telling you this, I also tell you how hopeless I consider it for this world. Her experience in the terrible past makes me ashamed that I had to let her know by even a sign, that I love her:—and my own past, makes me more ashamed still. I am not ashamed that I love her. I am glad, happy in it in one way. Glad, because it is to me the token of the genuineness of the new life in me. I could not afford not to love her,—but I am ashamed that I could not have been strong enough not to annoy her with it. I feel that she ought to be allowed to live undisturbed, in the place and work she has chosen as a refuge from the great sorrow that would have crushed her had she been any less than she is. I must not disturb her: I can't afford to have her shrink from me:—and yet this must be every time I meet her, as long as she knows that I have these thoughts toward her. I cannot keep out of her way here in Clifton. We meet of necessity everywhere, in our mutual Christian work. We are both interested in the same things,—seem naturally to take hold of the same end of affairs. It seems strange that it should be so,—and I am powerless to help it. I often think that this is the means the Lord intends to employ to send me out into some other

field, where my life-work as a Christian is waiting for me.

"I don't want to move hastily, I can't afford to make a mistake in this matter. I have prayed over it, and now, you, mother, pray for me, that I may be able to know just what I ought to do.

"I cannot mention this to any one of the dear friends, to whom I usually go for counsel, for fear I should betray the cause of the change I think of making. It must be all between you, and me, and God.

"What queer creatures we are! Why can't I meet her, and work with her in the church, and be still? God, who made me as I am—no—I must change that:—God did not make me as I am:—sin has had too much to do with me to make it right for me to finish what I began to say;—but God, who is my Father and Redeemer, who 'knows my frame that it is dust,' knows all about why I am as I am, and why I must go away from the vicinity of Annie Dayton, so as to leave her in peace. I can understand that this will cause you some anxiety, my dear mother, and I can wish most heartily, for your sake, that you had a different son, but I am truly trying to give you reason to rejoice in me.—I shall never do anything to cause you sorrow, God being my helper. And sometime I may be able to have you with me in a home that I shall make for you. I have thought much about this, of late.—If I could find some point where I could open up a business, which would furnish an income sufficient so that I could take care of you, and make you happy, I should be glad. Here again, I am met by the fear-

ful consequences of my foolishness. At my age, with the money I have earned, I ought to have already the means to do all this; but, mother dear, I will do the best I can to redeem the time already lost.

"I shall keep you informed concerning all plans, and shall be up to see you before long, when we will talk it all over.

"Don't mention to the Dunwells anything that would make them anxious about Paul. I am going out to try to find him. I have been thinking all the time since Gospel meeting, as I have sat here writing, that if I had half the energy in my work for Christ, that Aunt Gracia has, I would have known all about him before this. I am going to find him and bring him to the Hall, where we young men will have a little meeting by ourselves this evening at six. This is not a regular thing. We generally go to Uncle Benjamin's class at Memorial Church at that hour, but the storm is still too bad for them to be allowed to drive out to the farm after night. The churches will not be open, and a few of us agreed that we would meet at the Hall Parlors, and have a little meeting. I am to lead it.

"I must be going at once—I shall have no more than time to go around by Paul's room, and call for Charley Graham and get to the Hall by six. So good-by. Don't forget to pray for your boy,

"HOLLIS."

"P. S. I did not stop to even fold this letter when I went out;—so it lies here all ready for me to add a

postscript. I went around to Paul's room and found it closed. I had not time to look about for him,—and should not have known where to look if I had. So I went to Graham's and pulled him out to go with me to the Hall. He had got himself settled for the evening at home with his wife and little Clem, but I persuaded them to excuse him.—There were five of us, besides John and Mary Smither's, who take care of the Hall and live in the lower part. I was so troubled about Paul and Bert that I had to ask the rest to pray for them. They were all good trustworthy workers, so I knew it would be all right. We did pray, and we talked and tried to comfort each others' faith,—but I think every one of us felt the cloud of this anxiety. We stayed sitting about the table and talked until late, about what we ought to do. Charley Graham said he did not think we had all been doing our duty by Paul and Bert. He was afraid he had not. They had been left to take care of themselves or be cared for in the lump with all the other converts, when they needed the special treatment which had been given some others.

“ ‘Me, for instance,’ I said—for I felt it keenly.

“ ‘Well—yes—you, and I as well,’ he replied.

“ ‘You ? ’ we all exclaimed, in amazement.

“ ‘Yes, I—’ he answered. ‘You never heard my story, but I have one. Time was, when I needed special care, such as could not have been given me by the ordinary church services. Why even my pastor, with his cigar,—I was a member of the Waymarket then—was not able to help me. I know all about this fight with the devil incarnate in appetite.

I have fought the fight, but have not yet finished the course : and I have an awful fear sometimes that after all, I may disgrace my Lord yet.

“ ‘ Aunt Gracia and Uncle Ben—I named my baby for him, were my good angels in those days. I ought to remember better than I do, what help a young man may need ; their boys have had no such care as you and I had.’

“ Imagine my surprise, mother, at this from Charles Graham. I have often heard him speak of a time when he needed friends, and of his early acquaintance with the dear Weldons ; but that he ever really had any experience that would make him understand us, I did not dream.

“ ‘ I am hurt and ashamed,’ he went on, ‘ to think that I could, for one moment, have forgotten the grace by which I have been able to stand, or the sharp battles I had to fight, and the strong helpers I had on every hand.’

“ If he had to say that, I surely ought to be ashamed too. I ought to remember that with all the help he and his wife, and all the rest, have given me, I have only just made out to stand. No one probably—no—for Charles Graham can’t know it—no one among all that company ever knew so well as I what those boys needed : and yet I have almost forgotten them ; and now, if they have slipped in one of the slippery places, have fallen, O, I hardly know what I shall do. Pray for me, mother dear, that I may be kept awake to the work which I, of all others, ought to be doing.

“ We agreed to say nothing about this, but that we

would each see what we could do to find and save Paul and Bert to the Christian life they had begun.

“ Good-bye again, dear mother. HOLLIS.

“ P. S. I don't believe I am especially sectarian, but I can't help feeling that if those boys had joined Memorial church instead of that Waymarket, they would get along better. Pastor Wadelle is a good man—and while he does not really take hold in our temperance work, yet he does not hinder us.

“ H.”

CHAPTER III.

THE worldly element in the church is mischievous enough, when it remains dormant, or confines its activities to the sphere of the social, the charity ball, progressive euchre, gathering revenues from buildings rented for immoral purposes, buying up voters, hobnobbing with rich corporations whose plans seem laid with especial reference to the desecration of the Lord's day, and the breaking down of the safeguards of innocence and helplessness: but when it undertakes the care of converts, it becomes positively, viciously dangerous, even as the blind leading the unwary, and the catastrophe foretold by Christ will not be long delayed. The Rev. Lemuel Somerfield had several children, some married and settled in Clifton, while three, two blooming daughters and a son, still kept the "Elder" and his wife lively in their parsonage home. There were also two younger Dates, a son and daughter, and Ellen Griffin, with her sister Sybil. These young people formed the centre of a social circle, which for position, wealth, and the eclat that high-caste religion can give, was not surpassed in Clifton. The Somerfields, by virtue of their distinguished father, the pastor for twenty years of the old Waymarket church, added

to their own graces, were the natural leaders in this set.

It had been the especial mission of the Rev. Lemuel Somerfield, and his accomplished family, to make Christianity attractive. He had deplored the fact that it had been represented in so austere a guise, to the world, that it instinctively fled from its presence, instead of coming into the fold of the church. The idea that people must be so strict, that young people must abandon all pleasure to become Christians, was to him exceedingly repugnant. He believed that the world was given man, richly to enjoy; that we honor God most by having a good time with the life and blessings he has given us.

These things he preached and practiced; and his children, in their lives, gave especial emphasis to his teaching. Miss Leonore Somerfield, was "forever bringing something new" to the gatherings of this select circle. Some game, or play, or puzzle; and she was said to contemplate issuing a little volume of social requisites, at her good father's advice. She was considered a perfect "trump," in herself, at the card tables; and the new and entrancing measures which she would reel off with her pretty feet on the waxed floors of the Waymarket Christian homes, were enough to make the French dancing-master green with envy. A charming face and figure, sweet voice, good-natured heart; she was a powerful ally to her father in his efforts to make his church the most attractive and popular place of resort in the city. Miss Ada, the younger sister, was Leonore's complement in all things; and the brother, De Quincy, her

ardent admirer, and graceful escort,* always consulted his sisters in regard to the odor of the cigars he smoked, and the cut of his clothes, and hair, and the color of his neckties.

Elder Somerfield rejoiced that his children had such a thoroughly good time at home and in church work, that they gave him no trouble running off after the coarse and low things of vice. They enjoyed the best wines of the old parsonage vault, with their father; and all their "little wickednesses" were so seasoned with the salt of the covenant, that the flavor was simply delicious.

In describing this delightful condition of the chief home of the parish, and these graces and gifts of the leader of the set, the reader will readily understand the atmosphere in which these young people of the Waymarket church grew and thrived.

The great revival of the winter had at first been ignored by Elder Somerfield and his people. But after a while it developed proportions and influences, which alarmed him for the good order of his own flock; so he went in with his whole force, that he might be able to exert a controlling, humanizing influence, and prevent fanaticism. Especially did this become necessary, when the temperance question began to assert itself, and the gospel was tinctured with reform in personal and political life. At home, as, after a long meeting of deep, spiritual power, he and his children would solace themselves with wine, and cigars, and a quiet game of euchre, they would condole with each other over the necessity of mixing with such an element;—while, in public, he rejoiced at the floods of

grace that were being rained out of heaven upon their favored city.

Elder Somerfield considered it his duty to win as many of the young people as possible, to his own church, that they might come under the healthy influence of a free and liberal theology. To this end, he employed the social gifts of his charming family and their friends. What success attended their efforts is of interest to us.

Paul Dunwell had started out honestly to reform, with a deep conviction of his desperate condition, and a profound desire to redeem the past. The purposes resulting from this condition of mind and heart, had been slowly, thoughtfully found, gaining strength by his attendance upon the revival services, in company with Hollis Ellenwood. In those days, Hollis had given almost every moment of time off duty at the factory, to the salvation of his old friends. When Paul took the step which placed his old associates behind him, and brought him among Christians, it was boldly taken; yet with a certain thoughtfulness that inspired confidence, and produced a deep impression among the old crowd, and set in motion the first genuine wave of enthusiasm that had been known in church circles, in Clifton, for years. Under the intense feeling thus awakened, Bert Springer yielded at last to the personal invitation so often repeated, by Hollis, and joined the company of seekers after the better way. He had been in a feverish condition of mind ever since the arrest of Tom Dwight, and the developments which had threatened to lay bare his own reckless career, to the friends in his distant home.

He had run very close to a disgrace which he did not covet, and now, this chance of a complete change in the character of his environmen's, by the conversion of his boon companions, was a welcome relief from the burden he had been carrying. The resolution to join them in the new life, produced an immediate uplifting of his feelings, and he was glad of the opportunity to announce the wondrous change. With a brilliancy of utterance which his old chums recognized as peculiar to him under excitement, and which thrilled all who heard, he poured out his confession of repentance, and his determination for the future. He literally captured all hearts at once; as Deacon Griffin expressed it, "taking the kingdom by holy violence."

"Bert was nothing, if not brilliant, anyhow, you know;" said Walter Brown to Henry Griffin.

"He'll shine, if he sets up for a Gospel light."

"You illuminate, he will," was the reply.

Paul and Hollis looked at his transfigured face, and listened to the liquid flow of music from his lips, with joyful surprise.

"And yet," said Paul, "it might have been expected. He was, you know, the speech-maker of our crowd. He always makes a stir, because he never goes into anything by halves."

"That's so; he always kept the fellows awake and up to everything. He'll make a leader."

So, out of the usual order of things seemed the experience of Bert, and so pronounced was his leadership, that Hollis rather drew back abashed. Had there been any possibility of such a thing, he would

have doubts of his own conversion, because, in all the months of quiet steady living for God, he had not been able to produce any such glow and sparkle, as Bert had surrounded himself with from the first moment. As days passed, he noticed that whenever Bert arose in a meeting to give testimony, or, more properly, a dash of exhortation, to the "boys" in the rear of the audience, there was always a rustle of expectation on the part of the people; a flash of brightness over all faces, sinner and saint. Especially did he seem to impress the Somerfields, and the Waymarket people generally. Often after the meeting, Miss Leonore and her sister would sail up to him, and load him with congratulations, as though he had made some fine exhibition of rhetorical or literary ability, after the manner of a prize contest. It would have seemed in perfect keeping, if he had been presented with a bouquet, constructed in the highest style of the emblematic art, with the Waymarket compliments. Hollis noted this, and was glad of the fact that all those wonderful powers of his friend were from this time to be on the side of temperance and godliness. Yet he was puzzled. He noticed that while all these signs waited on Bert, as soon as he himself arose to speak, a heavy silence filled the place; every face became grave; the Waymarkets looked annoyed; some others grew pale; sadness filled many eyes which turned toward him. He could but see and feel this, but he could not understand it. He did not dare breathe a word to any one about it, for he felt mean in himself, that he should even notice it. For days it chafed and worried him, until at last he

took it to God, and had it out with himself on his knees. He would not be cheated by anything of his peace with God; but somehow he could not feel easy and at home with Bert. Bert was drawn into the Waymarket influence. He and Paul had always been chums, and now were inseparable; so that even before the meeting closed, Hollis seemed left entirely one side, by the advancement of his friends. Bert made the most flattering, patronizing demonstrations over Hollis; but from this he shrank, and it soon became evident that something had come between them, which left Hollis more alone than he had ever felt himself before, since he became a Christian. This was, however, all of the inner life, a secret between him and his God. He did not breathe it, even to himself. He fought it daily on his knees, and in wakeful hours at night.

Outwardly, the three young men worked together: Bert leading many a charge upon the godless throng of lookers on, with Paul at his elbow, and Hollis coming slowly, gravely behind. There was always a movement in the crowd as Bert approached: smiles, nudges, remarks, which he received with a bright face, and familiar hand-shakes, and slaps on the shoulder, accompanied by some spirited appeal, such as, "Come now, old fellow! don't you think it's time you got converted?" or, "How are you, old chap? glad you're here! come and join us: there's nothing like it!"

These invitations were received evidently in the same spirit as they were given. Paul did not have much to say, only to endorse Bert, whom he looked

upon as a sort of lion, a marvel of power. He wondered a little, himself, at the change which always came over the crowd as Bert passed on, and Hollis came up. All the fellows grew still then: they would stand huddled together, as if afraid of his quietly spoken words. Sometimes he would stop entirely, and stand, engaged with some young man who had suddenly dropped his mask of indifference or mirth; and listened with strange self-forgetfulness in his face, while the whiteness of intense introspection spread over it, as Hollis reasoned, presented Christ, or encouraged by some promise, or bit of personal testimony, until a decision was reached, either of immediate surrender, or of careful thought, or the pitiful "not to night." A few times Paul paused with Hollis, but Bert generally succeeded in keeping him.

When the extra meetings closed, Hollis fully expected Bert and Paul to come at once into the work at Union Hall. Paul seemed to expect it as a matter of course: but Bert never thought of such a thing, until Aunt Gracia, in her kindly fashion, suggested it and invited him.

"O certainly," he said, in his flippant way, "if I can be of any assistance to you in your good work, I shall be glad. Just let me know any time, when I can do anything for you."

"Thy work is waiting for thee to find," replied Aunt Gracia, gravely turning away with pain in her gentle face.

Hollis heard this, and felt a chill in his heart; but thought Bert was sure to find his work somewhere, and do it grandly; if not at Union Hall, somewhere

else. Hollis was generous enough to believe that there were other fields of labor, which just as truly belonged to the great Husbandman as this. But he did want Paul and Bert with him, and it seemed only natural.

But Bert did not come. Paul seemed to vibrate between the two, Hollis and Bert. If he fell in with Hollis on Sunday afternoon, he was sure to go to the Gospel meeting, have some good word of testimony, and say he had "enjoyed it immensely," it had "done him good," he should "certainly come always after this." But it would be weeks before he would be seen again: and now he had dropped out entirely.

Bert and Paul were favorites in the Waymarket church, and were absorbed into its society. Hollis knew nothing especial about this people, save that Elder Somerfield was an inveterate smoker; but in the simplicity of his confidence in everything bearing the name of church or Christian, he believed all must be well, and very cheerfully left his friends to the care of their agreeable and assiduous friends. He silenced the longing of his heart after the boys whom he had always liked so much, and went on in the same quiet way as before.

When, however, he began to see them in such close proximity to what he believed to be danger, he became anxious, as his letter indicates. But he had allowed them to pass out of his intimate association, and it was now no easy matter to break through the barrier between them, to interpose a word of warning. It looked meddlesome to attempt it.

Paul had wanted Hollis all this time. He was in

earnest in his work, and felt the need of help such as he was not getting. He made efforts to draw Bert with him to the place where he was sure he should be more at home; but for some reason Bert would not be drawn; and was strong enough to hold Paul, in spite of the cry of his hungry soul and his love for Hollis. Bert admitted that "Hol is a grand, good fellow," a "regular brick," but "slow." "And as for Union Hall, he did not intend to always keep before him the fact that he had been down. He was not proud that he had been a drinking fellow: he was ashamed of it: and wanted everybody to forget it just as fast as they could. He had no use for that place, and the crowd that gathered there, and as for that Aunt Gracia, he didn't think he had any need of a nurse. There was no sense in the idea that a fellow couldn't straighten up, without any of that temperance tinkering, especially if he got converted. Christianity was good enough for him, without any reform stuff mixed with it. Of course they did a good work for a certain class down there; he would be willing to help them, go any time and speak for them, if they would just let him know they wanted him, and advertise it, and get out a crowd.

This sort of talk from Bert, rattled off in his spirited, off-hand way, had a positive effect on Paul, beside many others: resulting in the withdrawal of many, who would otherwise have come under the helpful influences of the W. C. T. U. work.

This was the condition of affairs at the time Hollis wrote the letter given in the last chapter.

As will be perceived, many things of which Hollis

and his fellow-laborers were totally ignorant, were at work against Bert and Paul, and it is probable that the utmost vigilance upon Hollis' part could not have materially changed the outlook, except, indeed, that faithful service would have left no room for self-accusation.

For the next few days Hollis had continually before him the purpose to find the "boys," and have a "good square talk" with them. But the pressure of business left but little leisure. At length, one afternoon, in going rapidly along the street, on a business errand, he suddenly encountered Bert, with a package of Gospel Hymns in his arms. The sight startled him. A thrill of gladness passed through him; his heart grew suddenly very soft, and seemed almost melting within him; his eyes grew misty, his muscles relaxed so that his knees felt weak. Bert's face was bright, and with a quick, glad tone, he cried out:

"Hello, Hol, old fellow! I'd shake if I had another hand; where in the world have you been keeping yourself? Been snowed in?"

Hollis was too deeply moved by this unexpected encounter to reply quickly or lightly. He grasped Bert's arm, and in a murky tone, said:

"I've wanted to see you, Bert. I've looked and looked for you and Paul: been to your room several times—and—and I'm more glad to see you—with them," tapping the books, "than I can tell."

Bert laughed a light laugh.

"What did you expect to see me with?" he asked, in a tone of badinage.

Hollis colored slightly.

"Come now, confess."

"Fact is," said Hollis, "I did not expect to see you at all now. You took me by surprise. But I have been—a little a-a-n-x-i-o-u-s about you, and—and—last Sunday night we prayed for you—and Paul—at the Hall."

"'Twas very kind: sorry you troubled yourself, though. Paul and I, you see, have been kept pretty busy off times. We've got into pretty lively services, I tell you. The Waymarket is a perfect Bee Hive, with the social club, and musicals, and lyceum, and progressive euchre."

"Progressive euchre!" cried Hollis.

"Why, yes: certainly. Why not? The club meets to-night, at Deacon Griffin's. Hank, you know; and I tell you, Hollis, we're after him to draw him into our set. I don't see what he ever ran off to Dem's for, when he could have such jolly good times in his own church set. We're fishing for Hank: baiting our gospel line with this euchre club, and we're sure to catch him."

Hollis was speechless, and Bert went on:

"We've got in with a splendid lot o' fellows, Hol, and such fine girls. Leonore and Amy Somerfield know just how to make things boom. And the Elder himself, and Mrs. Somerfield, and the Dates,—they know how to have good times, if they are Christians. Just to think that that Graham's wife, was a Date! I never was so taken back as I was when I got acquainted with them folks. I used to think it would be awfully dull to be good: but I tell you

I've found out one don't have to wear a straight jacket."

"Why no;" Hollis found voice to answer, "of course not. I found that out long ago."

"You? Why Hol! you dear, old solemn-sides! That's the only fault I ever found with you. You were such a jolly sinner, but you make such dreadfully serious business of being a Christian."

"I—yes—of course—it is serious business. I was not a jolly sinner when I was in my right mind. When insane with drink, I dare say I was like a clown; but I carried a heavy heart always when sober. I have too much to remember to be very lively; but I am glad and free."

"You don't seem so. You remember too much. You look woe-begone, and actually seem tied to Union Hall, and that Quaker woman."

"Bert!"

Hollis' tone was sharp with pained surprise and indignation.

"O now, don't fire up," laughed Bert. "You have just a spice of the old fellow I knew once, about you yet, I see. I might have known that was a sensitive spot. But really you make yourself ridiculous, and your Christianity don't commend itself as a very lively article. We all think the same about that. But you are a good fellow, Hol; everybody knows you're solid; no getting around that. But, if you'd spruce up, and drop some of your straight drab and poke-bonnet notions, you'd draw better."

Hollis felt his blood tingle, but he simply shut his hands tight and stood rigid. Bert went on:

"I have learned some things, old boy, that 'twould do you good to know. Some things in the Bible that 'll knock all the straight-laced theories of fanaticism out of a fellow, if he has any faith in the old book. We're going to have some of these questions up for discussion at our lyceum; meets to-morrow night. Come over, do, that's a good fellow, do you good,—meets in the church; fine old pile: finest in the city, and the Elder is just a regular old bird at presiding. I'd like to introduce you.—These books? yes, I was commissioned to get some new ones: takes lots o' books to go round; such a crowd. And say, Hollis: I am going to surprise you with an announcement. I'm going to speak in the pulpit in the Elder's place next Sunday morning."

"You are?"

"Yes. The young folks of our set thought 'twould be nice:—draw, you know. And the Elder is exceedingly accommodating to us. His daughter, Leonore, you know, is the moving spirit. And I'm going to fill the pulpit."

"Well, I am surprised! What will you talk about? What's the object?"

"O, no special object, you know, only they thought 'twould be a nice thing; and, you know, they have a pretty good opinion of the ability of your humble servant—and—want to sort of show me off, I guess—a little tame lion business."

Hollis turned sick at heart; he would not have been much more hurt and shocked if he had really found Bert with a whiskey bottle in his hand, instead of the Gospel Hymns, as it had turned out. He stood

silent. Bert looked at him with commiseration, and a patronizing air, which, however, was lost on his friend.

“Come over Sunday morning:—would be glad to see you in my audience.”

“Thank you,” said Hollis, slowly.

“Well, I must be going; glad to have met you. You see you needn’t be anxious about me, old fellow, or sit up nights in Union Hall to pray for me. Hello! till I see you again.” And the bright elastic figure turned, and walked gayly down the street.

CHAPTER IV.

HOLLIS looked after Bert a moment, watching the confident stride, hearing the quick ring of the proud step, and his heart sank lower and lower, pierced through and through with a keener anxiety than he had ever known in his life. He loved his old chum with the pure passion of a Christian, added to the sentiment of past memories ; and, with an intensity that almost sent him flying after him, he longed to catch him, and hold him, and drag him like one in imminent danger of death, away from the Gospel hymns he carried, from the Waymarket church, its Social Club, its everything, especially the pulpit into which he proposed to step next Sabbath morning. Alas ! alas ! if anything being known as a church, a member of the body of Christ, could fall so low ! He had never felt such burning indignation, such a sense of shame as stole through his veins. A feeling almost of debasement came over him, as he thought of what this church must be. And there came the suggestion that it might possibly be that Bert had misinterpreted things, in themselves right and good. Of course Christians should enjoy life. All he said about the straight-jacket was, in a sense, true ; but the progressive euchre, what of that ?

He was sorry he manifested that flash of anger. If he could have caught that "Bert!" before he had said it, and modified his tone: but, after all, it was righteous anger. No Christian had any right to speak of Aunt Gracia lightly. It was shameful, mean, to speak as Bert did. He knew he was grave—but woe-begone?—he knew better. Gravity was in order under the circumstances. It would become any man who had led a month of such living as he and Bert had known years of. Bert had better cultivate it as a Christian grace. A man did not have to get drunk to fall from grace. It was not always a good sign to carry your arms full of Gospel hymns. Filled with such reflections, he went about his errand. On his return to the factory, he went, as a matter of simple justice, to Charles Graham, and said:

"I met Bert just now: he—"

"O! did you? was he—sober?"

"Sober? y-e-e-s. He had not been drinking; he had an armful of Gospel hymns, on his way, I think, to the church: at least that's my impression; he was appointed to purchase a new supply, at any rate."

"Good enough! I am relieved. And Paul is all right?"

"So he said. They have a lyceum in the church to-night—"

"Yes? well, that's right: a good thing for the young people: be well for us."

"And, he is going to speak from the Waymarket pulpit next Sabbath morning."

"Indeed! is he? Well! That is good news.

We have allowed ourselves to be troubled for nothing."

"I—I don't know. A-a-t l-least it does no harm to p-pray on."

"Of course not: but you're positively stammering. What? Bert was surely all right, Hollis?"

"Charley, something's wrong. I wish you'd see him: talk with him, find out what 'tis, and help him and Paul out."

"Help them out?"

"Yes: they never needed help as they do now, and that Waymarket church is in the way."

"In the way? Hollis, what do you mean? Sit down: let business wait a minute: tell me what is the matter."

Hollis told him.

Charles Graham sat as much as a minute after the recital without lifting his eyes from the little heap of blotting-paper, which he had picked up with the point of an old pen, and had been working over and over. But at last he leaned back, clasped his hands behind his head, and looked at Hollis, and asked:

"Are you going to hear him?"

"I don't know, don't seem 'sif I could; but maybe I'd better; but I want you to go."

"I shall."

He leaned forward again, and looked forward abstractedly.

Hollis waited.

At last he said in a thrilling tone,

"Oh, how can He bear it! I don't wonder he cried, 'Woe is me for my hurt . . . My tabernacle

is spoiled . . . for the pastors are become brutish, mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird; many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot.' I should think the Lord would get so sick of those who call themselves His people, that He would spew them out of His mouth. Don't they know better over there? . . . But no: I suppose they don't know. If they had ever been down in the depths, as we have, they would know that they might just as well give those boys whiskey as cards, and all that sort of demoralizing stuff. It is dreadful that souls should be the stake of such ignorant foolishness. I had an experience with Mr. Somerfield, and the old Waymarket church, years ago; but this is a revelation. My wife's mother has always been a member, and the family attended there, but,—yes: I shall go and hear Bert, and then I shall know better what to do."

"Something must be done at once," said Hollis; "and say, Charley, perhaps you can tell me why I am not able to make my Christianity attractive."

"Attractive, man! I'd like to know what 'tis if not attractive, to me at least."

"But to the world. Bert thinks I'm woe-begone:" and he had to laugh a little.

"Well: is that so? you don't mind that?"

"Yes I do, if it is going to prevent my work for him, or any one. I know I am sober, grave; I can hardly help that."

"None too much so for a man. You are no longer a boy. Yet there should be sometimes a relaxation from gravity. I never thought you were woe-

begone: but I think you are perhaps more constantly sober than you should be. I don't remember to have seen you having a real jolly laugh."

"No. I dare say. I don't know when I have felt like that. I don't know what would make me laugh as I used to."

"But you ought to: what's to hinder? you must not carry this or any other trouble. You must not be troubled at all: you must be glad, and carry it in your face."

"But—"

He could not finish; he got up, turned abruptly about, and stood very still.

Mr. Graham regarded him a moment, and then stepping from the tall office stool, went around to his face, and laying his hands on his shoulders, said:

"Hollis, I know a few things besides those you tell me. I can see. It is not only this about the boys: but you are growing a little morbid about—a little morbid, I say; and it interferes with your work. You can't work, loaded, can you?"

"Unless it is my work to carry a load."

"But is it? Now see here: I have at least a brother's right. There is some one you think about a great deal, and—"

"Don't, Charley!"

"Hollis."

"Not now, Charley, not now."

"Well; you have the right to seal my lips, boy. I won't: but Hollis, be a man."

"God helping me, I will be at least a Christian."

"Good: the greater always includes the less:

being a Christian, you must be a man, with the rights of the Christian man."

"Yes."

"And that means—"

"That means more to me, I think, than ever you can dream. I claim my right every hour."

"What do you claim as your right?"

"Strength—to—be—true."

"That is so general, Hollis, that I do not understand its present application. I wish I could. It would be better, I am sure, but of course, if I must not try, I will not."

"There are things that—"

"Yes, I know—"

"That are not right for everybody. I must deny myself, take up my cross daily and follow Him."

"But—"

"Please don't, Charley: only pray for me."

"Hollis, I will not trespass. I know when to talk with my tongue. Can't you trust all to God?"

"I do, certainly: everything. There is a perfect understanding between Him and me."

"That's good: then I shall not worry about you in any event: only, as I said before, be manly, that is all."

"I shall try to be that: but, to be that, I must be able to not—to be silent when other men would speak."

Mr. Graham opened his lips again to reply, but Hollis, with a long clasp, laid Charley's hands down from his shoulders, turned and walked away. There was that in his face which made Charles Graham

think of Christ, with the clouds under His feet, on His way back to His throne.

"Well," he said to himself, "it's too bad for Annie Dayton to be cheated by this fellow's grand conscientiousness out of that which is her right. He would make her forget the past, glad for all the days in which she knew sorrow. We must have a council of war, Hortense and I, yes, and Aunt Gracia and Uncle Ben. Wonder if they dream of it? Wish Hollis had seen Annie's face that night of the opening, while he was speaking. She must have her rights.'

The next Sabbath morning, Charles Graham and Hollis Ellenwood were seen going in with the great throng that always filled the old Waymarket church, when the weather was fine. This Sabbath was especially favorable in itself, to a large turn out. The long storm and cold had kept people at home, and this day dawned cloudless. The sun, a great globe of glory, rolled up its shining way, and earth and sky were full of splendor. Heaps of snow, piled everywhere, to make room for street and sidewalks, glowed like cuttings from some great brilliant; and when the church bells rang, all Clifton came out, and took her way, decked in all the beauty of holiday attire, to the house of worship. It seemed to Charles and Hollis that everybody nearly must be going to the Waymarket, and that everybody had a new seal-skin, and that many looms of India must have been laid under tribute for this especial occasion.

Announcement had been made in the "Sunday Morning Gossip," that the "popular young convert, Bert Springer, of the gold and silver electrotpe

works, would occupy the pulpit of the old Waymarket, which he had chosen as his church. That he would speak upon his observations as a young Christian, and that an especial invitation was extended to all his old friends, and those of the same business house, to be present."

Bert had become the fashion in Clifton, so that fashionable society adjusted its eyeglasses, and read the notice, and smiled, and was tickled by a new sensation, as by a feather freshly plucked. It was with peculiar zest that she arose from the sofa, put off morning gown and slippers, donned silks, velvets, kids, martyred songsters of brilliant plumage, and made herself ready for worship.

Our friends found themselves caught in the current of fluttering, gossiping humanity; they had little to say themselves, hence heard the more, and found food for meditation.

"So brilliant!" remarked one sealskin to another.

"So I've heard. I'm quite dying to see him. Leonore just raves over him; but they say he has been very naughty."

"O yes; but that only makes it all the more charming, you know: the lovely prodigal story, and I thought it was so nice, the way dear Mr. Somerfield spoke, when Mr. Springer and his friend came into the church. He said: 'We improve on the Elder Brother's part of the old story:—no standing outside and grumbling among us; but, leaving the implements of our long service in the field, we hasten to the merry making over the wanderer's return.' Wasn't that beautiful?"

"Perfectly grand! And I can imagine just how the sweet old man said it."

"He said there was nothing so mean as a jealous, grumbling Christian."

"That's true: and nothing is so disgusting as a shabbily-dressed, long-faced Christian."

Their voices were just behind our friends, and they were compelled to hear, as the long procession in front kept them in the same position all the rest of the way to the door.

"There is a sense in which this is all beautiful to me," said Charles Graham, in a low tone, to Hollis.

"Yes, I was just thinking that same thing."

"But, taught from the standpoint of the world, it is dangerous: nothing so deadly as meat that has become putrid. Rancid truth is a greater fraud than error that carries its label on the pot."

To enter the wide portico of the massive stone pile, was a plunge into the dark from the dazzling whiteness of the world, as God made it that glorious morning. The "dim, religious light," struggling through costly stained glass, set in narrow panels in the walls, brooded like the wings of a raven over the congregation, already crowded out into the aisles and alcoves. A white shirt front met them at the door, and slowly, outlines began to mark themselves on the black background, so that they were able to follow the usher, after he had turned the back of his coat upon them, and started up towards that end of the church, from which a low mumble came swelling down upon them, as the grand organ began the voluntary. The heavy carpet under their feet gave

back no echo, and had the feel of a bank of moss. There was a faint rustle like summer foliage, and the air was sweet with all the odors of the gardens of the east ; these, with a gentle breath as of zephyrs on their cheeks, awakened a sense of summer. They were seated in chairs in the broad centre aisle, and as their eyes became accustomed to the light, they found themselves in the midst of such magnificence in polished woods, costly frescoes, blooming exotics, and elegant wardrobes, as distinguished the old Waymarket from all other churches in ten cities.

The music was superb. The Waymarket was very fond of grand simplicity, in this department of its display. Congregational singing, led by a trained, salaried choir, which intoned the grand measures of the ancient harmonies with a perfection not often realized. Lovers of sacred music thronged this temple, as to a recital of a well-chosen programme, and went away to discuss the relative merits of the performers, as from an opera. And yet there was nothing operatic in their singing. Pastor Somerfield had good taste : so had his daughters ; and good taste was manifest in all the choral arrangements. This good taste required that the singers should be worshipful, such as became the house of the Lord, and it was so.

Hollis enjoyed the service of song : it was to him a revelation. Under its spell he forgot all that was painful in the errand which brought him to this place. As his eyes became serviceable in the dim light, he saw Bert sitting in the great chair at the left of the broad platform, while Mr. Somerfield sat at the right,

beaming alternately upon him and upon the congregation.

Bert was perfectly at home: he might have been bred on the platform, so perfectly was he master of the situation. He took a fine white silk handkerchief from his breast-pocket, shook out its folds, and stroked his handsome mustache with two or three delicate touches, and looked out over the vast throng.

The preliminary exercises consumed more than half the time allotted to the service; and every selection had been carefully made with especial reference to the occasion. The invocation was a masterpiece, and in the prayer Bert was mentioned as gifted by the spirit of eloquence; and commended to the work of winning a misled world, to the blooming fields of the kingdom of peace. It seemed to be settled in the mind of the pastor, that Bert was destined to the platform, if not the pulpit.

The introduction was in Elder Somerfield's happiest vein. He said that he had requested his young friend to come before them that morning, because he was sure they would enjoy his silvery eloquence, and because he desired to give him a start in what he was glad to believe would be his life work. Those who had heard him in the past would not find it hard to believe that his place was the arena of public life.

During the introduction, Bert caught the eye of Hollis, that was fixed upon him with such a searching gaze, as disturbed him for just a second. But he regained his assurance, and at the moment when the Elder turned to him, he arose with his Bible in his hand, and was ready to begin.

All Scripture is profitable, to the soul lighted by the lamp of the Spirit, but dangerous as a sword in the hand of a child, to him who would grasp it in the darkness of his own understanding. Bert was yet in this darkness, and the result was inevitable.

He arose, gave his coat a little jerk in front, adjusted his shapely neck in its faultless collar, opened his Bible, and began in a clear tone.

"I am glad," he said, "to see before me so many of those especially invited: those with whom I am daily associated in business,—and whom I know so well. When this place and opportunity was kindly offered me, and I began to think just what would be my errand before the public, I said to myself, I shall tell the young men whom I know, if they will come to hear, what has resulted from my three months as a Christian. I know how you look at it, how you look at the Bible: and why many of you are not Christians. I know what you are waiting for; and I want to say a few things, that I believe will help you to a better understanding of the requirements. Now as to the Bible, I want to read something which took me by surprise when I found it. It is the third chapter of Ecclesiastes, written by the wisest man who had ever lived up to that time; you know we were all taught that Solomon was the wisest man."

He read the chapter, and then continued in the same racy, taking, pointed style, to throw light upon it. The profoundest attention prevailed; and it was certain that he was like a chieftain on his native heath, in his power over the audience.

"I have been glad," he said, "to find that religion

is not the solemn thing I had supposed, and this I want to help you all to see. I should have become a Christian long ago, but for the misapprehension under which I labored, that I must cut myself off from all pleasure; and I know many a good fellow, who would come in and help us boom the church, and travel with us to heaven, if they could just know the truth. They don't like to be counted in with roughs any better than any of you would. I never did, in my worst days. I was not a rough; they are not roughs, but they are set off with them. They'd like to be respectable, and—and all that. They'd like the society of nice people, but they've got the same idea that I had, that they'll have to give up everything that makes life agreeable. I found one of them the other day: had a talk with him: and he seemed perfectly amazed when I told him I did not have to sign the pledge, or give up all pleasure, to be a church member. He was interested at once. I surprised him, further, by telling him of some of the jolly good times we have; about the Social Club, the progressive euchre: our elegant church parlors; and the entertainments which our fair friends of the gentler sex provide for us; of the times we have found to dance, according to the teaching of this book. I expect to see that young man, with many others, coming in among us one of these days, and giving to the further embellishment of this beautiful house, a good share of the money that now goes into the service of sin."

There was a flutter of sensation in the audience. He went on.

"I consider myself very fortunate, that the associa-

tions of this grand old Waymarket were thrown around me in the beginning of my new life. When I started out, under the radical teaching of the time—I do not wish to criticise, but simply allude to a fact—I started like one who nerved himself, by clinching his hands and shutting his eyes, for a desperate plunge into a cold bath. I felt that I had it to do, and made up my mind to do it, if I never smiled again. But as good fortune would have it, I found myself at once in the midst of as warm-hearted, and jolly a lot of fellows, and fair ones, as I ever knew in my life as a sinner. (Sensation.) They made me feel at home; they proved that a good time was possible, even to a Christian.”

Bert happened to look down at Hollis. His set pale face startled and annoyed him, and he fired up to the work which now he felt he had to do, of defending the cause he had espoused, against Hollis and his old-fogyish notions.

“I know,” he said, in a louder tone, flushing and taking up his Bible, “that there are some people who only see in the Scripture which I read, the part about the time to weep, the time to mourn, and so on. Who seem to think it is a sin to be young, and full of life and fun, as God made us; who would make a grave-yard of every garden in the world if they could; whose religion is a thing so dull, and slow, and solemn, and—and wet, that you hate it, and are ready to cry out with the wise man in this chapter, ‘What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboreth?’ I want every such man or woman to hear this: ‘He hath made everything beautiful in His

time,—also He hath set the world in their heart,' 'and also that every man should eat, and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labor,—it is the gift of God.'

"For my part this is what I intend to do: I intend to make everybody whom I meet say, 'There goes a jolly Christian.' I intend to make those of my old friends who still think it is making a great sacrifice of comfort and good living to join the church,—sick with envy, because of the evidence I shall carry with me, that truly 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,' the real happy gay life that belongs to His people." (Sensation.)

So he went on, in his spirited, rattling way, never at a loss for a word, rounding his periods like a born orator, dropping now and then a spicy bit of slang, expounding in his open, off-hand way the teachings which good Pastor Somerfield had given under cover, year in and year out.

Many from other churches had come to this service, to hear Bert; some from curiosity, others from genuine interest; and as he went on, their faces were a study. Mr. Somerfield was just a little uneasy at a few expressions, and the boldness with which he set the matter forth; but, in the main, it was to be considered a success. Bert certainly held attention to the close,—and impressed all with the fact that there was ability, that might be turned to account.

If he could but be taught and made to feel that time is God's, and that He has cut our portion into sections, giving to each a specific value, which made it necessary that we should note its passage, counting it out, as a banker would the gold from his vault,

redeeming it all as precious unto the Lord; if he could have seen that while God made us for gladness, and enriched us with sources of delight, yet His good gifts misspent, time unredeemed, could give a man reason to weep, and mourn, in spite of it all: that loss, sorrow, war, must always wait upon the profligate life; but that Christ, having redeemed all our days, would keep us in peace and joy in spite of everything, if we would be loyal to Him.

If some one could have given a clear insight into what it means to live to Christ, and die to sin, to do whatsoever we do, in word or deed, in the name of the Lord Jesus, Bert Springer's after life and influence might have been different.

The close of the service was in eminent good taste. The old "Praise God" was grandly rendered, the benediction pronounced as Paul the apostle might have done it, and the audience rustled out into the splendor of the winter noon.

"Would you like to speak with Bert?" asked Charles Graham of Hollis, as he picked up his hat.

"No-o-o—not now."

So they went out with the rest.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN the great storm was over, and the streets open, and the ladies began to gather at church, and in society, Mrs. Graham was missed from her wonted place. She had begun to get her house ready for company, and was shut in with her little household, as not before for years. The family at the cottage consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Graham, and three children, with Nora, the faithful house-keeper. Clementine, of the children, was alone these days; the two boys, Philip and Benny, named for Uncle Benjamin Weldon, were making a long visit to their grandmother in New England. First, because their grandmother was lonely, and insisted that she needed them, and second, because this life in the country was supposed to be a good thing for the young fellows, who needed more room than they could seem to find in the narrow enclosure of a city home, and because Philip was not overstrong, and did not seem to grow. The house had been very lonely without these boys, and Clementine often pleaded, that either her brothers might come home and help her out with the inevitable city restrictions, or that she might be allowed to join them in their delightful country freedom. But of late, sundry

talks with her mother, and occupations which they shared together, so filled the heart and life of the little maiden, that she pleaded no more, being content to wait the next September, when limitation of time would necessitate their return. The days were full and hallowed. A sweet far-away foreshadowing of womanhood, gave strength to the beauty of the child, as with her tiny thimble and work-basket, she took a share in the quiet domestic preparations, which were uninterruptedly advancing, under cover of the storm. This was a period in the history of the Grahams, that Clementine and her mother would never forget. Mr. Graham was the constant companion of his wife and daughter when off duty in the great manufactory; and because of this blessed association, during the sacred weeks, it seemed to the child that every hour spent at school, or anywhere but in this charmed home circle, was almost lost; so that even after the streets were cleared, and the children of the neighborhood were merry with their coasting, Clementine still shut herself in with her mother.

The first Saturday in February, the two were sitting with some dainty work between them. Nothing had been said for some time. At last Clementine drew a long, vibrating, almost womanly sigh.

"Why, my dear!" said Mrs. Graham, looking quickly down at her, "where did such a sigh as that come from?"

The child looked up with a sober gladness in her eyes, and her lips quivered with a tremulous smile.

"Oh, I don't know," she said, "only I'm so happy, mamma, that's all. But I do wish the boys were

here to be in it all, and that papa hadn't looked so when he read that verse this morning."

"What verse, dear?"

"About David, you know. Wait, I'll read it."

She sprang up and got her Bible, turned a few leaves, and read: "'And David said, Solomon, my son, is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical of praise and glory throughout all countries. I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.'"

She held her finger on the page, and looked up at her mother, while her eyes began slowly to fill.

"My darling child," cried Mrs. Graham.

"I can't help it, mamma; I don't know what it is, but it's kept coming an' coming. I've kept thinking an' thinking 'bout that look of papa's, when he read it; he looked up at you so. I've thought I should cry, only I'm too happy to cry, and I wish the boys were home, and papa never, never need go off to work any where, so we'd all be together all the time."

Mrs. Graham reached out her hand, and with a cheery little laugh, drew Clementine to her.

"I know what's the matter, dearie; you've stayed too closely shut in here; you ought to be out with the Sloan children, coasting."

"O no, mamma, that aint it at all. I like staying with you better'n anything."

"Yes, I know, and I like to have you better 'n anything; but we mustn't always do just what we like. These little nerves need a good tussle with the fresh air. There is one thing I want you to do now.

I want you to fix yourself up, and go out to the farm with a note for Aunt Gracia. You can take time for a little visit at the Lodge with Miss Annie. Nora will be sure to have something to send out for the sick girls. The walk will do you good."

"You're just making up something, mamma, to send me away from you, I know," and the child began to cry in earnest; "and I don't want to be sent away. I'll go and take the things, of course, but I don't want to stay. Monday I'll have to go to school, you know."

"Very well, my darling, I am sending you out because I know you need it, but not away from me, child; you shall always be with me in spirit, you know. You can come back after you have rested awhile, but when you get with Aunt Hittie, I think you'll want to stay to dinner and spend the day."

"Aunt Hittie's awful nice," said Clementine, putting away her work, "and so's everybody out there. I do think Uncle Ben's too lovely for anything, and John Mark's getting nicer every day, only he's getting to be an awful teaze, mamma."

"He is?"

"Yes, he is. He teazes Miss Annie 'bout—don't you think, mamma—'bout Mr. Hollis. And I think she's—well, she's—don't you think, mamma, she's just the beautifullest young lady you ever saw?"

"She is very beautiful, surely, and very noble, my dear. I consider that we are favored to have such a dear, sweet friend as she is, and Aunt Gracia."

"Oh, Aunt Gracia!" and Clement clasped her hands, while a rapt expression came over her face.

"I never could love anybody just as I do Aunt Gracia. She always makes me think of Jesus, mother, and her 'thee' and 'thou' are just the sweetest words. I guess, after all, mamma, I'm glad to be sent out there."

"I thought you would be when you began to think it over. Spend the day, if you like. I'll send papa after you in the evening. He would enjoy the call, himself, and 'twould do him good."

"Well, I'll see ; maybe I'll stay."

Clementine wrapped herself up in her warm, white fleece, kissed her mamma, got a little basket from Nora, and skipped away.

Nora closed the gate after the child, and then presented herself to Mrs. Graham.

"Don't think you know how cold 'tis, mum," she said, "or you wouldn't be after lettin' Miss Clement trapse way out there."

"It will do her good, Nora. I have been very thoughtless. She has kept herself right here beside me, hurrying from school every day, and sitting right down to her sewing. She is getting really nervous. The cold will do her good, and I hope she'll stay to tea."

"Well, all right, mum ; but I thought as how you didn't know in here how cold 'tis. Beats all how this snap does hould out ; folks 's just runnin' with hands to their ears."

"Well, Clement will know what to do if she gets cold."

"That's so ; bless the child, she allus knows what to do. I never see her ekil 'bout that," and Nora returned to her kitchen.

Clementine sprang lightly over the crisp pavements. On the next block she found Malcolm Sloan, busy with his pick and shovel, taking out the snow that had been accumulating, and that in some places was solid as ice, waiting for Saturday, his day of days for work. Rupert, his brother, was busy keeping his shivering dog, Shep, in a corner of the fence, with the hard chunks of ice which he was throwing at him.

"I think you're real unkind to poor Shep," said Clementine, in her outspoken way. "I never saw such a sorry-looking dog. I've a good mind to take him home with me some day, and comfort him up."

"Wish you'd take me," and Rupert laughed.

"O Rup!" cried Malcolm.

"Never you mind, Mal," said Rupert, with quick anger.

"I never pay any attention to what Rupert says," replied Clement, with a scornful toss of her head.

"O no, it is Malcolm—Malcolm," sneered Rupert.

"Well, Malcolm is a gentleman even to dogs," and the little girl turned a bright face towards the object of her admiration, which made Rupert pale with rage, and caused poor Shep more trouble than before. The child was quick to sense the storm she had unwittingly evoked, and turned slowly away, glancing back, however, as a sharp yelp from poor Shep smote her ear. But Mrs. Sloan had come to the rescue, so she went on.

"Hello, Clement!"

"Why, is that you, John Mark?"

"You might have seen me before if you hadn't

given your eyes away so completely," and the young man laughed. Clementine looked frankly up into his face, smiling, with a little frown between her eyes.

"I always do feel so sorry for poor Shep Sloan," she said.

"You'll feel sorrier for another member of the family one of these days, if I guess right."

"Why, what's going to happen?"

"Oh, strange things, stranger'n fiction," and he laughed again.

"I should think you were trying to tease me, if—"

"If what?"

"If you weren't a good Christian."

John Mark looked sober.

"Mustn't good Christians tease folks?"

"Well, I don't just know 'bout that, but of course it depends on—on—the truth. I should think they'd have to be careful how they do it, so 's not to say things that aint true, you know."

"Did I say anything that aint true?"

"I could tell better if I knew all you meant by the 'strange things.' It may all be true, but I can't tell. I don't feel as if any strange things were going to happen there."

"You don't?"

"No, I don't—'n I don't think you do either, so now. I'm going out to your house."

"Are you? well, that's nice. I'll have company for my walk."

"Yes: so 'll I."

"But your company won't be as nice as mine."

Clementine looked up at him, with a puzzled face, a moment, then suddenly gasped—

“ Oh ! ”

John Mark laughed again.

“ Don’t you think so ? ” he asked.

Clementine did not know what to answer, or whether to be pleased or not ; but her bright, guileless spirit came to her relief, and she laughed also ; then with sudden recollection she answered soberly,

“ I think my company’s nicer than he used to be.”

John Mark was taken by surprise, and silenced. He had not reckoned on the fact that this wee innocent child, whose loveliness had such a charm for him, was in the secret of his past. And doubtless through all the pain of his repentance, he had never regretted his profligate life as he did this moment. What would she do, this beautiful, pure child, if she knew, and could comprehend all that he had been ? She would fly from him, he was sure. He almost shuddered at the thought that she should ever know more about him than she did now, and wished, as he had never done till now, that it all might be forgotten.

They walked on silently ; Clementine wondering at the gravity of his face, until they came to the factory.

“ Oh,” she cried, and gave a little skip, “ there’s my papa’s place ; I want to just look at him one minute.”

“ All right.”

John Mark opened the great door, and she led the way, springing down the long passage to the office. Mr. Graham was not in, but one of the clerks said

he was down on the next floor. John Mark led the way this time, until they found him, with other men, among piles of wheels, iron bars, leathern belts, etc.

Clementine sprang to her father's side. He turned and caught her to him, lifting her by her elbows, to take a kiss from her lips.

"How's this, Peggy?" he asked.

"Mamma is sending me out to see the farm folks, and I wanted to kiss you before I went, that's all."

"Well, then, here's another;" and he lifted her again. "It's nice in you to come just for that, but I suppose you'd better not stay, you might get in the way of the wheels; and iron wheels have a way with little girls, that papas don't like."

The child chirruped a little laugh, and looked around with awe.

"What are the men doing with all this pile o' things, papa?"

"Putting up some new machinery for us to work with. Take care!" and he caught her as she was hopping back to get out of the way of an operator, and swung too near a revolving wheel.

"This will not do, dearie; it is very unsafe;" and lifting her, he walked out into the passage with her on his shoulder.

"I didn't know but she was used to coming," said John Mark, apologetically.

"No; yet I'm glad she came. I was very glad to see you, pet; I'd like always to have you in sight if I could:" his voice trembled a little, "but now I must go back. Going to the farm, did you say, dear?"

"Yes; mamma sent me."

"I'll take good care of her," said John Mark.

"Yes: I know you will. Well, take a pocketful of love to them all from papa."

"Mamma's going to send you after me to-night."

"Ah, is she? well, all right, we'll have a jolly walk back, then; good-by."

Clement threw her arms about his neck, as he stooped to her, gave him a great hug, kissed his cheeks, and lips, and eyes, clinging with arms and lips, as if she would never let him go.

He allowed her to detain him, enjoying to the full the sweetness of this cup of joy which heaven had given him, and which was to him as a blessed sacrament, always taken in remembrance of Him. At length he put her arms tenderly away from his neck, clasping her mittens closely in his hands for an instant, while he looked down into the liquid brightness of her eyes, took another kiss from her lips, and turned away.

She followed John Mark very slowly toward the exit.

"Good-by, darling," called her father again from the door, in which he lingered, watching her.

"Good-by, papa."

The two doors shut between them.

"Oh, I don't like the things that make it unsafe for a little girl to stay with her papa," sighed the child.

"You love your papa very much," said John Mark.

"O-o-o! Everybody ought to love my papa."

"You're right there, he is a good man: I don't wonder you like to stay with him. So you have a quarrel with that machinery, have you?"

"Almost, I guess ; but then it aint so bad as some things. I know some little girls that—Oh, I 'spect I hadn't ought to complain, there are things worse than 'chinery and wheels."

"What things ?" he asked, thoughtlessly, wanting to hear her talk.

"You know, John Mark : saloons ! You know 'bout 'em ; they make it more unsafer, 'n my papa's place is for little children. It's a good thing for your little girl 't you got out of 'em, and got to be a good man 'fore you had her."

Poor John Mark ! How the sweet, silvery voice of the lovely child stabbed him to-day. But he had to answer. He made his tone as light as he could, but his face was painfully sober.

"You're right again, my young friend. I am glad I'm out of it all, but how do you come to know so much, child ?"

"That aint much to know : everybody knows 'bout you, and 's so glad that Aunt Gracia got her boy back all right. We thank God 'bout it, and pray for you 't our house every day."

"You little cherub ! do you pray for me ?"

"'Deed I do. I never miss. I love Aunt Gracia, 'n Uncle Benjamin, and Aunt Hittie, and Miss Annie, so much."

"And don't you love me any ?"

"Yes, 'course I do ; more 'n more, when you get nicer 'n nicer every day."

"Thank you ; I think I shall remember that."

"Oh, there's Fannie Mead !" exclaimed Clemen-

tine, as they turned a corner. "She's talking with that Bridget McGuire."

The indignant tone made John Mark smile, in spite of the fact that a frown came over his face. But why should he care to whom Fannie Mead talked?

"I like Fannie," continued Clementine; "she's got to be a real nice girl since Miss Annie took her, but she'd better stay away from Bridget McGuire."

"What do you know about that, chicken?"

"Why you seem to think 'cause I'm a little girl, I don't know anything."

"Well, I'm corrected by this time, my lady, I assure you."

"'Course I know, everybody knows the difference 'tween good folks 'n bad folks; an' that folks that's trying to get good, after bein' bad, better stay away from bad folks."

"Yes, little monitor, that's the how of it."

They had come up to the place where the two girls stood.

"How do you do, Miss Clement?" said Fannie Mead, with a bright look above her at John Mark.

"Oh, I'm pretty well, thank you: and I'm going out to your house. You'd better come along."

"Had I?" and she laughed and blushed. "Well, just as you say;" then to Bridget, "Now don't forget, Biddy."

"O, I'll not forget. I don't forget like some other folks does."

"And you'll come?"

"Won't promise."

"O do, Biddy; you'll never be sorry. Miss Annie said—"

"Now you needn't Miss Annie me. No, I won't go, so there! Go 'long with your John Mark, and let me 'lone."

Fannie blushed, and tears filled her eyes.

"Well, I shan't let this be the last of it, Biddy; good-bye now."

She came shyly to Clementine's side, and took her hand.

"Here," she said, "I'll hold this little hand and keep it warm: it's bitter cold."

"What did you want Bridget McGuire to do?" asked Clementine, much to John Mark's comfort.

"Well, you see, Miss Annie told us girls we might each ask any other girl we wanted to, to our Martha Washington party, the twenty-second; and I thought I'd ask Bridget."

"What for?" and Clementine looked at her with big eyes.

"Why, because we used to be cronies, and I thought maybe she'd come for my asking, and'twould do her good."

"O-o-o-o!"

"She needs it, Biddy does, just as I did."

"And that was her answer we heard, was it?" asked John Mark, with indignation.

"Yes: and I'm so sorry; it does seem's if she had some awful grudge'gainst us all out there. She always gets just so mad whenever I say 'Miss Annie' or 'Gracia Lodge.' We've talked it over, Miss Annie and I, lots of times. She knew what I came down

town for to-day. She was going to pray for me too ; she'll feel sorry, but she'll help me to think of some other way. We're not going to give Bridget up. She don't know nothin' 'bout it, or she'd come and live with us, I know."

"She's a bad lot," remarked John Mark.

"Yes, maybe, such as we all were once, or would have been if Miss Annie hadn't cared about us and done something for us. She's wild, and wicked, and that's why we want her."

"I s'pose you think the good ones can get along 'thout you and Miss Annie, don't you ?" asked Clementine.

"Yes, dear, that's just it. But the poor wicked ones can't. You're a wise little girl to see it."

"Oh, I see it : and I think it's beautiful, 'n I want to help."

"Bless your heart, you can help."

"Can I ? O how ? what is it going to be ?"

"We're going to have a regular old-fashioned party ; going to fix up like the ladies did a hundred years ago. We've been reading history for weeks every spare minute we could get, so as to know how to do it. We all wanted Miss Annie to be Lady Washington, but she wouldn't do it. She said one of the girls should have that, 'cause 'twas the nicest thing about it, and that we girls should vote for one to be it, so we did."

"Oh, that was nice ; who did you 'lect ?"

"I didn't elect anybody," said Fannie, while her cheeks glowed.

"Why, didn't you vote ?"

"O yes: I voted for Kittie Lawson, and I think she ought to have had it; but—"

"Oh, didn't she get elected? Who did, then?"

"I did."

"You? Fannie Mead! Oh, that is nice; nicer 'n I thought. How do you do, Lady Washington?" And the child capered out before them, and made a profound bow, at which there was merry laughter. They were in the country by this time, so there was no one to wonder at them, but a street car driver, who was coming towards them with an empty car, slapping his hands to keep them warm.

Clementine was heartily glad by this time that she had been sent out to see and hear all these delightful things.

"And we poor fellows are going to be shut out of all this, are we?" said John Mark.

"No indeed; Miss Annie will tell you about that; but there's one thing I can promise you," and she gave him an arch look, which he returned in his own fashion.

"Just one promise: oh, what is it?"

"Well, then, you may get us a load of evergreens for decorations. We're going to make the parlor a perfect bower. Miss Annie don't know a thing about it, so don't you lisp a word, Miss Clem."

"Oh, I won't open my lips. I do think it 'ill be awfully nice. I want to help; you said I could; what can I do?"

"We'll see. We shall be glad of help. Some of the girls can't afford to take one minute from their work. They'd have to take time when they ought

to be asleep, and Miss Annie won't allow that, if she knows it. Kittie Lawson said, though, that she had danced all night many a time, and worked all the next day, so we all have; and she said she was going to take some evergreens to her room, and sit up and make a rope. She said 'twouldn't hurt her one bit. But I think every one of us ought to do just as Miss Annie advises us. Miss Annie gives me all the time I can get from the housework, though, and told me I could make the work light as I pleased; so I'm going to let some things wait till this is over, so's to get time for the fixin's. I'll tell you what you could do, Miss Clem; you could learn something nice to speak: that would be splendid."

"So I could. I know lots o' things already; but I should want something all nice and new for that 'casion; that is if Miss Annie'd like it."

"Oh, she'd like it. She likes anything nice 'n good, and she likes you."

"Does she?"

Clementine was not surprised by this statement, but she enjoyed hearing it, as though it was the greatest bit of news in the world; and hugged herself, and gave one of her little jumps, as she said:

"Well, I think she's—Oh, she's almost too sweet for anybody to love!"

"John Mark's eyes twinkled. Every sober line was chased away from his face, by the spirit of mischief. Annie was his cousin; he had played with her, and even quarrelled with her, when they were children; so he dare answer the little worshipper, as he did, for he said:

"Not even Hollis Ellenwood?"

"What do you mean, John Mark?" cried Fannie.

"Nothin' ;" and he drew his face down in a way that made both girls laugh, and Clementine clapped her mittens.

"Oh, I do think you boys can say the provokingest things," said Fannie. "Miss Annie wouldn't like it one bit."

"Well, if I must be punished, send her to do it. I shall know what to do," laughed John Mark.

The trio came to the farm-house in high spirits, ready for dinner ; "hungry as three bears," as John Mark said to Aunt Hittie.

Annie Dayton was in the sitting-room, talking with Aunt Gracia, as they entered. She sprang up and took Clementine's hands, and drew off her mittens, saying :

"How do you do, dearie?"

"Oh, I'm pretty well, thank you."

"Your fingers are cold ; but your cheeks are rosy as June."

"Cousin Annie's cheeks would be rosy too, if she knew all we said, wouldn't they, Clementine?"

"I guess she'd box you, till yours were red, too."

"Do you? Well, let's see. Clementine said—"

"Now, John Mark!" expostulated the child.

"Thee is surely up to some of thy mischief, my son ; thee better keep still," said Aunt Gracia, mildly.

"And thee better just sit down, mother dear, thee must not get excited;" and he took hold of her and placed her, helpless with laughter, in a chair.

"Now thee must listen,—Clementine said she thought Miss Annie was almost too sweet and beautiful, I think I quote correctly ; I'm right so far, eh, Clementine?"

"Oh, John Mark!—But I did say it, and it's true," and she clasped Miss Annie's hands tight.

"Almost too sweet and so forth, for anybody to love ; and I just said Hollis Ellenwood : what was the harm of that ? Then—" But the rest of the sentence was smothered in the folds of a towel, which Aunt Hittie threw over his head, and drew tightly from behind. A struggle ensued.

"Ouch, Aunt Hittie ! Just look at her cheeks, Clementine ! Whew ! I'll teach you a lesson, Aunt Hittie, if you don't look out."

He had the towel by this time, and chased Aunt Hittie back into the kitchen.

"There !" as he closed the door ; "now make yourself useful getting us some dinner ; and, Annie, you look fine with your roses. Don't you think Miss Clementine was so busy looking at Malcolm Sloan—no, 'twas the dog : the poor Shep—"

"There now, my son ; thee is really going too far with thy fun. Thee should never put such a thought into the head of an innocent little child."

"There, Mister John Mark ! What did I tell you ? I thought it was something not like a good Christian ought to do, and your own mother thinks so too. Sometimes I'm afraid he's a great, big tease, Aunt Gracia."

"Yes ; I don't blame thee, child ; and yet he'll learn better by-and-by."

"I 'spose it's 'cause he was off so long 'way from you 'mong bad folks, 'n he forgets."

"There, John, thee gets thy pay," said his mother, soberly.

"Yes, mother, it's been coming all the way, with interest. I am reprieved."

"You and I have to suffer together, dear, to-day," said Annie, "but I shall not mind it. I am very glad to see you. It is nice that we are to have dinner together over here."

"Are we? Oh, that will be nice; 'n I'm glad now I came; but I didn't want to leave mamma, at first."

"Mamma is well?"

"O yes, and we do have such lovely times all by ourselves, now, you know, but mamma thought I needed a walk."

"I dare say thee did, dear."

"And I found John Mark, and then Fannie Mead, and—oh, where's Fannie?"

"She went right on home," said Annie.

"Well, she'll tell you 'bout it; she feels bad."

"Does she? I didn't notice, did you, auntie?"

"Oh, it's just because she didn't succeed in getting Bridget McGuire to say she'd come to the Martha Washington, and—"

"I didn't much expect she would," said Aunt Gracia. "She's a very hard girl to reach. I think, sometimes, she will be better helped from some other source. She has a peculiar spite against us all; we will have to let her alone, I think, for she seems to have been hardened by every attempt, so far."

"I think you are right, mother," said John Mark, who had been silent since his mother's reproof. "I could see that to-day; I doubt if anybody could do her much good."

Annie Dayton had drawn Clementine to her lap, and was holding her feet to the fire, while the happy child sat looking up into her face, with a worshipful gaze, that made John Mark forget the terrible import of the words he had just uttered, even while they were falling from his lips, and he added:

"She hasn't any wings, Clement, feel on her shoulders and you'll find I'm right."

"O John, dear," cried his mother, "thee does seem very full indeed to-day. Thee better go down cellar and pick out some nice apples. Clementine must have one before dinner, and some to carry home. We'll have to give thee a chance to work off thy superfluous spirits."

"Talking about work," said John Mark, "I've got a situation."

"A situation, my son? What does thee mean?"

"I'm going to work."

"To work!" and her face grew very grave. "I thought thee had work here at home enough for all the rest of thy allotted time."

"Well, I'm going on Monday to take the place of fireman at the factory."

"Fireman at the factory!" cried Annie. "Why, John Mark!"

"Well, what's the matter o' that?"

"If you will leave the farm again, you might find something better than that."

“ And, my dear boy, thee knows—”

“ Now please just wait till you hear it all, mother. It's a deep laid scheme ; one of your own sort, though. I think 'twould have done you credit, but this time 'twas Hollis, Charley Graham, and I, did it. It's to get hold of Fletcher, some way. They thought I might possibly do it, and father doesn't need me till Spring, and we thought 'twas worth trying.”

“ Well, you have a startling way of unfolding your plans, John Mark,” said Annie, “ but of course that is worth trying.”

“ Yes, if that is what thee has in view, it makes a different matter of it,” said his mother.

“ Well, that's just it, pure and simple ; and Cousin Annie, as to doing better, if things were in such shape that I had to do something besides work for father, for a living, I fear my chance would be small for anything very flattering to the family pride, if there is such a thing to be flattered. I'm not skilled in anything. I threw away that chance, and it 'll never come again. I do not know now as much as I did at fourteen, when I started away to school ; that is, the things I know about, learned after that, are no help to me. Come to think it over, I don't believe I have any call to be very gay. Mother, thee did right to reprove me. Call me to order, anybody, when I forget and begin to shout around.”

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. GRAHAM sat, after Clementine went away, with her hands in her lap, busy with her thoughts. She, too, had noticed the text in the morning lesson. The pathetic sweetness of the expression, had touched her, and the look with which Charles raised his eyes to hers, had thrilled her. He seemed to take it for granted that she understood. The remembrance of it had much of solemnity about it, but so tempered with gladness, as to be restful rather than burdensome. It had furnished a still retreat from ordinary conversation or thought, which was grateful to her; under cover of which she had gone back to the beginning of things in her life, and had traced the Divine leading.

This home had been laid carefully, on the foundation rock of Christian principle; and builded according to the Divine plan as nearly as these two, Charles Graham and Hortense his wife, had been able to make out the design of the Architect. Preparation beforehand, had been the accepted method. To get in first with everything good and pure, before the evil could get a chance; this had been the aim, and to find just this expression in the Book, was a little startling to them both.

Hortense did not wonder that Clementine should notice that they looked at each other.

This preparation had been first in honest inquiry after the truth, and in a true consecration to God. In His name, guided by His word, they had been going on from then until now. That the reader may better understand, it will be necessary to give time and space to an explanation of the past. To do this we will only have to follow Hortense in her day dream, as she sat before the grate, with her hands folded idly over her work, and her eyes fixed upon the shifting lines of the fire. We give only the facts which formed the outline of the wandering thoughts.

Hortense Graham had been strangely reared. There was, on her mother's part, a foolish pride, which would not allow the daughters to soil their hands with anything which a servant could be made to do ; on the father's, a contempt for anything which savored of dependence. Hortense inherited the New England thrift which her father brought with him, and would have been willing to do anything that the comfort of the family required. Her mother was exclusive towards the outside world, and kept her family to itself. They seemed bound together by strong bands, until they came to the age of legal responsibility ; then they appeared either to be cut off from the home circle, or to withdraw and become in every respect as completely outside, as the rest of the world. Nothing was common after that. The moment they ceased to be minors, they must pay their way, even at the family board. The family motto seemed to be, "Every tub must stand on its

own bottom." Between the father and children there was always good fellowship, so long as they did not presume to depend upon him after they ought to take care of themselves. He taught his children that they must not expect to begin life where he left off. They must begin as he did, without a shilling, with no friends, and little education. He had been able to win a place and fortune : he now intended to enjoy it. If his children enjoyed such things, they must work as he did, and get them. He did the best he could to compel them all to start as empty-handed, friendless and ignorant as he did. But the public school system had defeated him at one point ; and the social conditions of Clifton had marred his plan in other directions.

Between the mother and children there was a barren waste of silence, into which they never intruded with a question. A proud, reserved woman, was Mrs. Date : impressing upon her children the idea that they were to keep their lives and their thoughts to themselves. Every luxury that a refined and critical taste could desire, or money procure, filled the palatial home ; and it was not an easy thing for sons and daughters to drop from this life, into the world, as soon as they attained their majority.

Horace and Hortense had been warmly attached as children, and when Horace became of age, and was obliged to leave home with his two suits of clothes, and one dollar in his pocket, which his father had given him, she would have left and shared poverty and labor with him ; but this was not to be allowed ; she must wait until her time came.

Mrs. Date attended the fashionable church of which Elder Somerfield was pastor. Her children went with her until they became old enough to stay away, and desecrate the Sabbath as their father did.

Hortense had made the acquaintance of the Weltons, much to the mortification of her mother, and the amusement of her father and brother. Aunt Gracia completely won the heart of the girl, and drew her into the warm current of her life. She had been wonderfully helped by this influence, and when at last Charles Graham came into the orbit of her world, with his noble, manly bearing, and his love, she found it not hard to forget the things that were behind, and press on to the hope in that which was a revelation of the Gospel to her.

As to Charles Graham, the most favoring circumstances had not surrounded his early life, judged from the usual standpoint. His father never surmounted the poverty of his youth, on the little ancestral farm among the hills of Vermont. His early death compelled Charles to look out for himself, while an elder brother took care of the place and the mother.

Charles came west, beginning his career in Clifton. Here he was found by Uncle Benjamin, and brought within the reach of Aunt Gracia's motherly hands, just in time to save him from the ever present evil, that with a thousand clutching fingers, watches to drag a young man down.

He was surrounded with friends, and given a chance to obtain a foothold among men. He secured a situation as clerk in a grocery store, a place in the church, and an assured position in a select social cir-

cle. Here he met Hortense Date, and loved her. As the natural human instinct which leads to the building of a home, developed, and he began to think of himself as the prospective head of a family, he was led to a conscious examination of his fitness for this office, which he believed to be of divine appointment, and therefore of especial sanctity. He found self-discipline necessary ;—education in those things that make for domestic peace. He had a quick temper, easily provoked, hard to control, and capable of cruel duration. One day after an outbreak in which he had said and done things of which he was ashamed, which had brought his Christian profession into reproach, he suddenly thought: “Suppose I had a home, with Hortense my wife, and I had acted in this way to her, or in her presence: what would I think of myself? what would she think of me? I must never do this again under any provocation. I must acquire a mastery of self in all things, before I ask her to live alone with me. I must be in myself, all I expect her to be. What do I expect her to be? What is she?” In trying to answer this question, he became wrapt in a delightful contemplation of the graces of mind and person, which had so completely won him, that they seemed the only language in which perfect womanhood could find expression.

“To be myself what she is; to give her in myself what I receive in her; that is the only fair exchange ;—but much must be done in me, to make this possible.”

What must be done? was the one question from this time with him. He sought the answer every-

where. He studied men, homes, books, sermons, prayers, testimonies, children.

He found out that culture of the intellect alone would not do in this emergency. Social science could not solve the problem for him. The transformation of the spirit, and the renewal of the mind, which would work an actual purification of the entire physical, was the only way. The old oft-told phrase, 'Put on Christ' came to him set in a new light. Not put on the perfections of Hortense the beloved, or of any other human, but Christ only. Thus was Christ lifted up above all things, in earth or heaven, in his sight. But just what did it practically mean, to put on Christ? Here was the old question taking on new form, and ever becoming more persistent and aggressive. He did not pray much these days, as to the outer form; was seldom on his knees. He did not seem to have time for that, but his Bible was always open. He could not waste time in closing and opening it. He ran from the store, from the table where he hastened through his meals, to the place in his own room where the book lay. The leaves grew ragged, with much handling. He cared little for sermons, but hungered after testimonies. He played the inquisitor to Hortense, and all his friends, especially at the farm. Strange doubts, black-winged creatures of the night came, and so darkened counsel with their mutterings, that he was almost in despair.

Various were the answers he obtained. One Sunday evening, going home from church, he asked:

"Hortense, what do you think it means to put on Christ, as it says in that place in the Bible?"

“‘To put on Christ?’ Why—I don’t know as I can really answer that. It’s a figure of speech, you know, and means to do right, of course.”

“Well,” and his tone was firm, almost hard, “there is this one thing about it, that’s got to be my wedding garment.”

“Your wedding garment?”

“Yes, literally. Hortense, we have promised to marry, but I will not have it done in such a way that it can’t last, and be true and holy to the end. I don’t believe you’d stay with me a year, if I can’t find out what this means, and make it practical.”

“Why Charley!”

“Yes, I know; but it’s so. I’ve got to find out how to put on Christ, to be married in.”

“Well, then, I guess I’d better be thinking about my outfit.”

“You seem all right to me, my love, but I know that we must both understand about this, if there is any truth in it; and if there isn’t—”

“Charley, you frighten me!”

“I am afraid.”

Pastor Somerfield came into the grocery the next morning after this talk, to buy some sugar. They stood together with the scales between them. The clergyman was full of genial conversation about many things; but he was a good man to interrupt with a question; so the young man said:

“I want you to answer me a question.”

“Certainly, if I can.”

“What does it mean to put on Christ?”

“To put on Christ?” and the good man took a

lump of sugar from the paper on the scales, and began to munch it. "It is very difficult to put that into any but the language employed by the inspired penman; yet we might say that it is to be covered with the righteousness of Christ, as with a garment."

"That sounds all right: the garment part of it; but just what is it to be covered with His righteousness?"

"Why, you know He fulfilled all the provisions of the law for us; and by His own worthiness in the sight of God, covers all the filthy rags of our unrighteousness from the sight of that Justice, which exacts righteousness from us."

"And we, after all, can only slip on His righteousness over our filthiness? Have to wear the rags underneath, is that it?"

"Well, you put it rather bluntly, but we can never be righteous, you know, only as we do put on Christ. I will take up this subject for my next Sunday's sermon. I am obliged to you for giving me something to preach about; but meanwhile, my young friend, remember it is all of faith, and the calling of God, not our doing."

"But one can't think of putting on anything without doing. I feel that there must be a great deal of doing, that I don't know how to do. Oh," he cried, with pathetic earnestness, "I am troubled: I do want to know how: I can't afford to make blunders in this matter: I can't take time to go out of my way in living: I want to find the true way."

"My dear boy," said the pastor, "I sympathize with you, and will help you, all I can. Christ is not

only the garment—but He is the way, you know. You will find it all down in the Book. The chart is there: the true map from Heavenly surveys, an unerring guide. But, as I said, I will get a sermon ready for you. I will go at once and get to work, and you may be sure I shall keep you in mind as I write. Good-bye, and God bless you, my boy.”

As the Elder went out, he called Charley to the tobacco case, where he bought a cigar, lighted it, and departed, puffing.

There had been something about the tone of his last remark, and the clasp of his hand in parting, that helped Charles very much; but when the weight of that cigar was added to his influence as a teacher, Charles was more mystified than before.

But he now had a new form for his question, which was a relief. It was not now, so much a garment, long and white, like a bride's; but a way marked down on a chart; a map, with boundaries, separating the wilderness of Sin from the beautiful Canaan of promise. At once he saw, in imagination, the distinctly drawn lines; the courses of the rivers of Life and Peace; the mountain elevations between which were the valleys, each named and located in Christian experience. “You will find it all down,” had been the words of assurance.

“I will make it my first business to find it,” was the resolution upon which he rested all day. And he did. He hastened eagerly to his room as soon as he had a right to do so, and began. Evening after evening he searched, but gained nothing. He waited impatiently for the Sabbath, and its promised sermon;

but came away from its delivery sick; like a starving man who had been promised bread and given a stone.

"I thought Elder Somerfield was sort of aiming at you this morning, Charley," said Hortense, as they walked away together.

"Did you? Well, he didn't hit the mark, then," was all he said.

There was nothing to say any more. He became very reticent; hid all his questions in his own breast. Christmas came soon, and he was invited out to the farm for dinner, to spend the day.

John Mark Weldon, then a cunning little fellow in knickerbockers, was busy with a dissected map, which Santa Claus had brought him, and which his big cousin, Will Dayton, was putting together for him, while his sister, Miriam, since gone to heaven, and his cousin, Annie Dayton, both little girls, stood by with their dolls, looking on. Charles Graham was drawn into the circle by a peculiar fascination which this toy seemed at once to exercise over him. The pieces were placed again and again, all in correct order, separated and laid in the box, tossed in a heap, and relaid, for the amusement of the children. But at last the girls went away with their dolls, the young men withdrew to talk together, and John Mark was left to wander up and down over the house and yard with his box of painted blocks. When again he prevailed upon Cousin Will to "put it together, just once more," one of the states was missing, and the great northern lake had lost its wing. Then was there an outcry—"It's no use; it's broke!" and it was tossed hither and yon.

That evening, as Charles Graham took up his Bible, he said, "This is just like John Mark's dissected map: all broke, pieces scattered all over a great house; wonder if 'tis of any use? If I could see it put together just once, all right: and have one good square look at what it is to be a Christian, practically, I think I might get along. But I fear it's all hopeless, useless, broke."

He went under the cloud of this doubtful faith for many days. Its gloom could not be charmed away by Hortense, or cheered away by all his friends. He was still under this cloud, when the demand was made which took him from the store to the life of a soldier. In the excitement of the time, this great question, while not forgotten, was thrust aside. The marriage took place an hour before he marched, and with something of bitterness he said to Hortense, as he led her down to the parlor:

"I didn't get my wedding dress, so I had to come in this," pointing to the soldier's uniform he wore.

Hortense never forgot the way he said it. It sent her often to her knees during the time that he was gone, and became the burden of her letters. But he never seemed to have anything more to say about it, until the time which necessarily brought it again to the surface. His long service in the army was at last cut suddenly short by a bullet through his lung. He was brought to City Point, and his bride well nigh made a widow. But there came and hovered over him a womanly presence that seemed to drop healing and life from the cool tips of her fingers; until with his discharge in his pocket, she started him

off to his northern home ; waving her farewell as the train pulled out ; then melting into the blue mist of memories, that always held a sign of heaven. He had often tried to picture that being to Hortense. She had an idea that she should recognize her one day, among the saints, by some peculiar, more than seraphic beauty.

CHAPTER VII.

WHILE Charles was in the army Hortense had been allowed to remain at home, by paying her board from the soldier's allowance.

Her marriage was not approved by any member of her family, except her father. To him the poverty of the young man was a recommendation. It would give Hortense a chance to begin at the right end. He only regretted that she was obliged to defer her beginning to keep house, with little to keep, until her soldier should come home; being thus compelled to linger in the lap of luxury. But her chance came.

She received her wounded soldier, as he was lifted out of the train; and took him to the two little rooms which her father had kindly found, and rented for her; paying one month's rent, as an especial recognition of her peculiar need. Here she began her "different life," with no servant, and no skill; with no knowledge how to prepare the most ordinary bill of fare, and with almost absolutely no means; for the soldier's pay had not been large, while the board bill had.

One thing she did possess;—nay, two: womanly, wisely instinct, and faith in God. The family pride also stood her in good stead. Moreover all of senti-

ment it could claim was aroused in her behalf, and the little home was secured against actual want. How all these scenes came back to Hortense, as she sat, this day, at her meditation.

One experience she would never forget. She had noticed with pain that her husband never seemed to pray, never took up the old Bible, that always lay beside his couch. He had not been strong enough to take his place as priest at their family altar; but she thought something was strangely lacking. This day, as he began to show signs of recovery from his journey, and had been talking of many things, she took up the Bible, saying,

"This is your old Bible, you see, dear. I found it among your things, after you left, and took it for mine; but now you shall have it again. I find your old pencil marks all through it. It has been a great comfort to me."

"Has it, dear?"

He looked at it a moment, as she toyed with the leaves, then reached out and took it.

"Poor thing, it's broke!" he said.

"Broke! Charley, what a funny thing to say; what ever do you mean?"

Then he told her about the long search, and the bitter disappointment, and about John Mark's dissected map, adding, "I suppose this is the best guide we have, but it's been dragged through so many languages, and tinkered with by so many interlopers, that it's got all broke, as John Mark said; or else I need more than anybody else, or am too material. I never could be satisfied with just the spiritual outfit for

this world. I've given up bothering;—here, please take it, it tires me.”

Hortense felt the tears come, but she choked them back. His face was averted from her.

“Are we to have no Bible, no prayer in our home?” she faltered at last.

“My dear wife! we will have anything to make you happy, if we can get it; but I don't—know—how—to—to pray. I tired myself out trying, years ago. Life is so stern, so much iron in it, so practical. This is all so spiritual; spiritual bread and water, spiritual houses, clothes, bodies, life. I'm too weak, too gross, too sinful, or something. I'll do the best I can, but must leave it after that with God. I expect He will do right.”

He took the book again. She drew closely to him, laid her cheek against his, and caressed his face with her hand. After a moment of this dumb speech, she lifted herself and said:

“I just remember something Aunt Gracia said. She said we get into trouble by trying to find a meaning for the words of the Bible. She says we are to take it in its plain, simple sense. She says, if you try to analyze a simple, you always get bothered.”

“Yes? I don't think I quite understand—anything,” and his tone was very weary.

“Well, just this way. She read the first chapter of Ephesians one day in her class meeting, or Uncle Ben's; she led it that day: and it speaks of Heavenly Places for us—ours you know. She said there was no need of having trouble and things if we'd just live in these Heavenly Places. She asked us what had a

right to go into heaven, and what couldn't get in there: and then she said that the Heavenly Place that each one of us was to go through this world in, would be like Heaven, of course. Nothing could come into it that couldn't get into Heaven; and all the furniture of it must be heavenly. So you see we could easily calculate what we are to have in our passage through this world, if we will go through it, shut up in Him. She said this abiding-place in Him, is to be our palace car, in which we shall ride over the way cast up, through the world that we don't belong to, and that don't love us, to our own country in Zion. Only, she said, it must be truly our dwelling place; and a dwelling place is to live in, to stay in. So He must be to us. Do you see?"

"Oh, I don't know," he replied: "it's rather mystical, after all. I'm tired now. I guess I'll go to sleep."

Hortense arranged the bolster, tilted the invalid chair backward, hovered about him a moment, then went away and left him alone. After this, as the days passed by, she noticed that the Book was often in his hand, and he seemed to like to have her read to him. But he would often suddenly stop her, with the same complaint of weariness, and turn his head away, lying with closed eyes. Sometimes he would startle her, out of this seeming slumber, with a question about the Word; so that she knew he did not sleep. Once, as she came in softly, she saw a tear on his cheek. He quickly brushed it away, and she let it pass unchallenged, although her heart ached to think that she could not share his secret trouble.

One day as she was busy in the living-room, his knock called her. She went quickly in. He was sitting up straight, without his usual support ; his face luminous ; his eyes dilating. The open Book was in his hand. "My darling," he cried, "I've found it at last, at last !"

"What have you found?" and she sprang to him, placing her arm at his back for a pillar.

"Why, the map ! A whole, perfect, little map ; so little, but as perfect as—perfect ! right here, where I've looked hundreds of times. See how soiled the old page is : all marked up : my own marks too, all around the right spot, that I missed somehow : so strange ! I must have been blind, or something surely. Didn't you know this was what I wanted ? Somebody ought to have known, and told me long ago. But I've found it at last ; it's wonderful ! I'm so glad. God did it. He showed me himself. We must thank Him. Kneel down here beside me, dear, we must thank Him."

Hortense dropped on her knees gladly. It seemed to be the only thing which would save her from falling. Her strength oozed out with every note of the thrilling tone, in which he talked. She thought perhaps he was just now slipping away from her into Heaven, and she was stunned, awed.

He laid his hand, with the book, on her head, and gave vent to the unsealed fountain of praise. It was like a Psalm, she thought ; one of David's own. It rang with heavenly intonation. Its diction was that of Canaan. She waited for him to pause, until her

heart could stand the pressure no longer, and seizing his hand and lifting her head, she cried :

“ Oh, Charley, my darling, what does it mean ? ”

“ Mean ? Why, it means that God has answered my long, long question. I see it at last.”

“ Where, dear ? ”

“ Right here ; where I told you. I’ve read it a hundred times, but never saw it before,” and he pointed with his long, thin finger. “ There ’tis ; the plain, practical rule, that will apply anywhere. Don’t you see ? ”

Hortense could not see ; her eyes were dim with rising tears. As she did not respond, he took it up, his tone clear as a bell, thrilling her every nerve, and read :

“ ‘ As He is, so are we in this world.’ That’s all ; don’t you see ? He, Jesus. We, who will follow him. Jesus and I. As He is, so am I to be. God help me ! And you, Hortense,” he added, taking her chin on his hand, as she still knelt beside him, looking up, with awe, into his face. “ That is, if we are to be truly His own, we must be representatives of Christ. Oh, how clear it is ! That’s a legal term, you know ; representative, ambassador, to act in His stead, to lay Him under responsibility in the sight of the world, by our conduct, our representations of what He is ; to do just as we believe He would do if He were in our place. Whatsoever He would not do, we must not do : whatsoever He would do, that must we do. But, oh, how can I, after all ? ”

His voice dropped from its tone of exultation, into a depth of unutterable pathos.

"How can I, with my—just as I am? It seemed easy at first. It was so plain, that it seemed I could certainly do it—but—"

His face clouded and the weary look came back. After a moment he said again :

"One thing I know He wouldn't do. And now if I keep on doing it, what am I? say, Hortense, what am I?"

"What is it, dear, that He would not do?"

"Smoke, or chew."

"No, of course not."

"As I do—as Pastor Somerfield does. I wonder if he ever saw this?" pointing to the text.

"I wonder?" said Hortense.

"Or sell it, as I used to?"

"N-o-o."

"As so many Christian men do."

"He would not do it."

"You can't imagine it?"

"Never!"

"I knew at first sight it would be so, and I must never touch it again. I can stop doing, if I can't do much. I'll stop. Hortense, take it all, every scrap, and burn it up."

As she was bidden, she took all the tokens of the life-long habit, and threw them into the grate. The odor came into the room, and never till that moment had Charley Graham known the strength of fleshly lust. He turned sick with an almost insatiable desire. But the word had been spoken which put the indulgence out of the possibilities.

“Throw up the window, dear, open the shutters,” he gasped.

Hortense obeyed, and as she did, met the genial smile of Aunt Gracia Weldon beaming towards the house as she was riding slowly by.

CHAPTER VIII.

AH, child!" she cried, pulling the rein, "I am sure thee threw up the window because I wanted to see thee."

"Oh, tell her to come in," cried Charles Graham, as he heard her voice. "I want her, I need her."

The message was given from the window and enforced at the gate, to which Hortense ran.

"You must come in," she insisted, as Aunt Gracia pleaded haste. "Something strange is the matter with Charley. Oh, we need you."

Aunt Gracia hesitated no longer, but alighting, and hitching the pony, followed Hortense to the room.

"Oh, Aunt Gracia," cried Charles, "I want you to help me find out how He is in the world, and how I can be as He is. That is the only thing left to know."

She took his hand, felt his pulse, laid her soft palm on his forehead a moment, and then with a reassuring smile, seated herself, letting her wraps fall about her.

"Thee will do it when thee finds out?" she asked, quietly.

"God helping me, I will. I have begun already.

I gave Hortense the privilege of burning all my tobacco. I shall never touch it again."

"Thee had still been using the stuff, Charles?"

"Yes, I am ashamed to say it. But I said to myself, why should I be so strict, when a minister like Pastor Somerfield used it? Why should I be required to be better than he?"

"He is not to be thy pattern."

"No, I see it now. It is not a question of what anybody would do, but Christ only."

"Thee has learned a lesson for a life-time, when thee has learned that; but now suppose we just look at what He says about Himself. That is the best way to find out about Him. Shall I tell thee how it looks to me?" and she took the book from his hand.

"Yes, do; that is just what I want. I thought a little while ago that I saw it all in just that one statement, in the seventeenth verse. It is all there, but it means so much, it staggers me."

"Then don't look at it all at once: just the little for the present hour or minute. It reads, you see, 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world;' that is, by the simple motive of obedience in our hearts, if we will stop quarrelling with our Heavenly Father—be not unwise but understand what the will of the Lord is—and then, to the best of our ability, do it, we shall be true representatives of Him; as true in our place, as Christ was in His. Everything first depends upon the motive as to what He did. Over here in John ix. 4,

He says : ' I must work the work of Him that sent me ; ' and in the fourth chapter and thirty-fourth verse He says, ' My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work ; ' and at last He was able to send in this report (John seventeenth, four) : ' I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.' And if you look in Matthew twentieth, twenty-fifth and twenty-eighth : you will find a bit of advice which is in harmony with this work of His : ' But Jesus called them unto Him and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you : but whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant ; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' Tell me, Charles Graham, what does this all mean ? "

" I should say it teaches that He came to take a subordinate position : that of a servant of all, both of the Kingdom of Heaven, of which He was the ambassador, and of the poor, rebel province which he had come to conquer."

" Thee surely has it ; and His victory and glory as a conqueror, was to come through faithfulness in serving : does thee see ? "

" I do : and feel as well. Do you know, Aunt Gracia, that has always been the hardest thing in the world for me."

" What has, dear ? " asked Hortense.

"Why, to serve: to take a subordinate place. I want to be at the head of things. Now, in the army, I always felt all the general in me; and my place in the ranks chafed and galled. I wanted to ride, and issue orders, instead of walk and obey."

"Of course thee did; that's one feature of the divine image in human nature; but we must accept the natural order of things, and walk, before we ride: boots before stirrups every time. And if we're going to accomplish anything, we must become subordinate to the power. That was what Christ did; we are to do exactly the same thing: allow the same power to control us, that did Him. We can't ignore the power, Charles. It must either control us, or break us. It must either use us, or grind us to powder. We must gear on to it, and so be made free by it, from the bondage of weakness, inefficiency, our own uncertain feelings, and the unstable opinions and customs of the world, or find its mighty resistless force going through us and over us, handling us, as the sea in its majestic might toys with the ships, great or small, that venture to challenge its strength. Thee can't get out of the tides of His power; it is only if thee were cut loose to ride the waves or stay hugging the cliffs of sin and let them grind thee."

"I understand," said Charles. "O how feeling, appetite, custom, opinion, have hedged me in among the rocks of this world! I have been in danger of being ground fine by the power between the surf and the cliff of my own selfishness. Nothing can save me that does not lift and carry me clear away from this dark promontory. How it has wrecked me!

“And that part about finishing comes home to me. I have never finished anything. I’ve been in the habit of giving up, if things didn’t go to suit me.”

“I know it;” said Aunt Gracia. “We have talked, Benjamin and I, about this and thee. I am glad thee sees it. We must keep on. There is not one promise to those who stop short of the finishing part.”

“But oh, Aunt Gracia,” cried Hortense, “how can we always finish what is given us to do? We don’t always live long enough, and—”

“Ah, dear, our finishing may not be according to our idea of things, but if our beginning and ending, and all that comes between, be of faith and obedience we may know that our work, whenever it may drop from our hands, shall be finished, as far as He with whom we have to do shall require. It will at least be in shape for Him to use. Its seeming imperfection shall only mark the outline where it must be joined to some other fragment which needs just this imperfection to complete it, and make perfection possible at last. The only thing we need to fear is, that we shall forget the one thing for which we are to do it all. What is that? what did Jesus work for?”

“That He might glorify Him that sent Him.”

“Yes: just as an agent of any firm, or an ambassador of any kingdom, or republic, honors himself most, by honoring those whom he represents—so He—and so we. How reckless Christ was of His own reputation. He did not care what was done with the name of Jesus. They were welcome to do anything with it they could do; for if the kingdom was exalted, so

must be the name of its Prince. His faithfulness gave Him boldness in the day when He was judged by men and powers. What mattered it if they did cast Him out as evil—He did not stop to try a rescue of His own reputation. It was the reputation of the kingdom that He cared for ; when they said He cast out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils, He did not stop to utter a word of refutation. He simply went on casting out devils. He left His name to be beaten about like a football, while He finished the work He had been sent to do. I suppose He thought time was too precious, and the King's business too important, to admit of attention to such trifles, as what people might think about Him. He left it for the Father to rescue His name, and exalt it above every name that is named in heaven or earth."

"But, Aunt Gracia! . . . but I guess I'll not say it: I'll stop before I begin."

"I think I know—"

"I expect so—you generally do."

"Well, it just comes to this—we must not be sensitive about ourselves, but faithful in service for the glory of the Kingdom: for, as long as its glory endures, the names of its true ones cannot be polluted with shame or reproach. See?"

"I see," replied Charles Graham. "This is a woven coat: it fits the figure like the very skin."

"We found that out at our house long ago: but we haven't got to the end of the lesson yet."

"Hortense:" and Charles laughed a little nervous laugh, "haven't you something to do in the kitchen hat you can't leave another minute?"

“No dear—why?”

“O—o—o—nothing”

“I am too interested to go if I had; but why should you want me away?”

“Well, you see,—I want you to think as well of me as you can; and this light makes very free with my miserable failures.”

“Many are the true words spoken in jest:” laughed Aunt Gracia. “O slow of heart are we all! Should we be more careful what our dear ones think of us, than what God knows about us? We may depend upon it, that whatever God knows about us, will be published to wife, husband, children, friends, enemies, all heaven and hell. That which is whispered in the secret of the soul, will be published upon the house top of the finished character. Just here in that silly remark may be the clue to much that has troubled them. Do not forget that thou hast to do with God only: and that as thou shalt meet obligation in the place where thou livest with Him alone, all things outside go right or wrong.”

Charles Graham grew very sober. He saw as he had never done before the cause of his despair; and again its dark shadow seemed to settle upon him. Hortense reached over and took his hand, and laid her cheek upon it: but this did not comfort him. Aunt Gracia, however, went ruthlessly on. She had longed and prayed for this opportunity for the truth, and now intended boldly to apply it,—so she continued.

“Over here in the third of John and seventeenth verse, Christ said, ‘God sent not His Son into the

world to condemn the world;’ and in the twelfth, and forty-seventh, we find this: ‘If any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not;’ and yet, how quick we are to judge and condemn and criticise.”

Charles and Hortense both colored,—looked at each other, and broke into a deprecating laugh.

“It’s no laughing matter, Aunt Gracia,” said Charles, “but it has hit us both so pat. Sharpness of criticism of the people about us has been a mutual talent, with which we have amused each other.”

“And if any man had told you he did not believe what you said, Charley?”

“Ah—h. If anything would ever put me in complete fighting trim, that would be it.”

“And how could he help it, Aunt Gracia?” said Hortense. “How could anybody help it?”

“Only the ‘New Creature,’ created unto holiness, in the image of Christ, could help it. But you see He is our pattern. We have no right to take up any arms but those which Christ used. And criticism was not one of them. If any man ever lived who had a right to judge others because they did believe Him, or look at things from His standpoint, it was Jesus Christ, for He came to speak the words that are life, which if any reject they must miserably perish. He came to teach that sin is a deadly poison, that it kills. We have eaten it. He is the antidote. ‘Whosoever eateth me,’ He says, ‘shall be cured: believe this: eat me, or ye must die: there is no other remedy. But even if ye will not believe me, I judge you not; I came not to judge, but to save. For this I was

sent forth: I obey my orders. Judgment is not mine now: mine is the place of the accused, misjudged, condemned: of the defenceless, the dumb. I have no advocate: nothing speaks for me among men: not even the good I have done, can plead for me against the reproach of the wicked. There are blind who see now, because I looked at them: dumb that spake, because I spake to them once; lepers who are clean, because I touched them: dead who are alive again, because I passed by; but of them all, not one to plead my cause: yet I do not judge them.' ”

“How could it be? how could He refrain? How could He help judgment? I do not understand it,” said Charles.

“Because He must refrain. He came to do a work that judgment, condemnation, would utterly prevent. Judgment, criticism, never yet saved anybody. Whom the Judge condemns is led away to punishment, instead of to the joy of liberty,—don't thee see? The Gospel, through its representatives, from Christ down, must refrain from meddling with the axe of the executioner. Salvation must come before this, if ever. I believe we hinder the Gospel more, by assuming the prerogative of the Judge than in any other way: and we cannot afford it, any more than Christ could. We have but one business here: to save the lost. This is taught us in the Word everywhere. He came to seek and save the lost. As He is, so are we in this world, to search them out, from all their secret hiding-places, and get them saved, if possible.”

"That is one of the things that puzzles me," said Charles Graham: "when I look into the plain teachings of the Bible, it seems as though God had not left us any time for ourselves, in which to do the necessary business of the world. Yet we are compelled to work, and earn money, and handle very material things. This is what began my hopeless despair. We are compelled by circumstances beyond our control, to do many unchristian—no; not that—unchristlike—no, I guess I don't know how to say it, but you know what I mean: matter-of-fact, every-day, sensual things, such as you could never think of doing for Christ, or of His doing, if He were in your place."

"It is a very common trouble that ails thee. The father of lies has been thy teacher, and he teaches a strange doctrine. Namely, that God was driven to making some things, for the uses of this life, so gross and 'practical,' and even unclean, that his Holy Spirit does not know how to handle them; but for which He has use so imperative, that he must endure them, like a wart or a stench. Nothing could be more untrue. And the lesson thee has stumbled on, so to speak, in this book, is to counteract this false teaching, and show thee the way out of thy trouble. Now just look at the facts in the case. This world is the Lord's: He owns it. Yes, and all the raw material in the universe: and He intends it to be worked up by pure, consecrated hands; and He also intends to have His share in the operation, working together with us. And He sent Christ here, to show us how to do our part. Now I can think of Christ

doing anything in the shape of work, or practicing in any profession, art, or science, that can help to lift the burden of sin from the shoulders of poor old humanity. I can see Him as a small grocer, in the humblest kind of an establishment, measuring out a gill of milk to a little child, and taking his penny in return; or as the great wholesale dealer, sending into all lands to gather and distribute by a system of lawful exchange, the fruits of the earth, and bring them within reach of all: I can see him buying and selling anything that will help to build up the strength of man, or woman, or little child; that will keep them clothed, and warm, and minister to the needs of body, mind, or spirit: but nothing that would tear down, mutilate, or defile the beautiful human temple. I cannot see him investing money in a brewery, or distillery, or tobacco-house, or selling the stuff; or taking revenues from it in any shape whatsoever; can you?"

"No: I cannot—that's what I told Hortense. I could see that plain."

"Thee don't think then, that the seamless coat that Mary made for him, had in it a pocket for cigars?"

"O Aunt Gracia!" cried Hortense, "it seems sacrilegious to speak of such a thing."

"How profane then must it be, for one professing to represent him in the world to do such things. Anybody would cry out at the idea of renting one of the beautiful class-rooms of our church for a saloon, or tobacco-house: and yet some of our church members think nothing of making a tobacco depository of the right or left vestibule, to the Temple of the Holy

Ghost, which their body is ; and so bringing upon themselves the curse pronounced upon any who shall defile God's temple. Membership in the church will not save such a man or woman from the destruction which is due the sacrilegious and unclean."

"I can see all this easily," said Charles Graham, "but work, now—how about that?"

"Work? There is no true legitimate work that I cannot see Christ doing. Look at Him as a young man with his garment girt up about his loins, and his carpenter's tools on his shoulder, going with Joseph after the early breakfast that Mary made them. Why nothing could be more like him than that He should labor with his hands to help build a house for some little family to make a home in : and that he should do anything that would be necessary to fill it with light, and warmth, and comfort, and beauty ; and I fully believe that in every worthy occupation, He goes before the consecrated laborer, and follows after, both to prepare the way, and to assure results. He has reserved nothing of Himself that is necessary to these results, and He has, as you truly said, left us no time for self, or the world: But He has so planned His work, that it is best done amid the ordinary affairs of life : in fact must be all in association with the every-day transactions of business. The co-operation of labor and capital, the service of public affairs, common social engagements in the daily routine of home life ; anywhere, where we are brought in contact with humanity or the material things of the world, is the place, and time, for our Christian work. And by all things which come into our hands are we to do it.

Anything which gives us an opportunity to speak, or act, is to be converted into a means of grace, by the skill of our consecrated powers, by which souls may be saved. The manner in which we speak or act and transact business is to be our testimony for or against Christ, and will therefore help or hinder God's cause in the world. If thee shall do or not do thy work as Christ would, if He were in thy place—"

"But, Aunt Gracia," interrupted Charles, "how can I? It is not in fallen human nature to do it."

"No, surely: thee has said it just as it is:—but who wants or expects a manifestation of fallen human nature from thee, a Christian? God does not: He will not be satisfied at all with that from thee, any more than He would from Christ: the world will not accept it: it would find fault, and have a perfect right to."

"But, oh—that's all I can give, I fear: I am full of it."

"Then thee must have it transformed, grafted into the divine nature, so that your fruit shall be unto holiness: that's what God and the world expect from thee:—a manifestation of divine nature through the regeneration of the human, into the likeness of the heavenly; does thee not see?"

"I hear."

"But do not see?"

"I—I think I see more than I can bear."

CHAPTER IX.

THERE was silence after this for a moment. Charles Graham lay back upon his pillow with closed eyes. Aunt Gracia watched him with all the mother in her speaking eloquently in her face. Hortense wept softly, with her face pressed against her husband's shoulder.

After a while he lifted his eyelids, and said :

"You teach, then, Aunt Gracia, that we are to take the words of Christ literally : the sermon on the mount, for example."

"How else would thee take them ?"

"Why, sort o'—you know the idea is that they can't be just literally applied : are to be taken spiritually, you know."

"Yes ? How is that ? Give me a case."

"Well, when it speaks of turning the other cheek if a man smite you on one ; now, that surely don't mean that."

"What does it mean, then ?"

"It means—it means—or at least I've always thought so, and I've heard it taught so, that—that—well—that you are sort o' to knock the fellow down with your fist, if you happened to be the biggest, while you forgave him with your heart."

This was finished with a burst of laughter. The incongruity of ideas destroyed all solemnity. Hortense laughed almost hysterically for a moment, and then settled down to downright sobbing.

"Darling," said her husband, clasping her hand tightly.

This brought her to her knees beside his chair, with her head under his arm. Aunt Gracia went on:

"That is the Gospel according to the world."

"And the very fact that we couldn't help laughing at it when we felt so—so—is proof that it's false as a clown—and yet—" stammered Hortense.

"Yes: and yet," said her husband, "that and yet is the cover to the very thing I want. Now, Aunt Gracia, can you make it plain?"

"It is the spirit that teaches. I can tell thee how it looks to me. Thee did not get far away from the truth in what thee said. If a man has not Christ in him, and so is left to the resources of the best wisdom of this world, doubtless the best thing he would know to do would be to knock the man down, and forgive him the while. But the true child of God is not to be left to that necessity.

"But we would have to submit to be killed, then. And look at this nation, Aunt Gracia: isn't it a righteous war we are in? Was I not serving God when I got this wound?"

"Was thee, Charles Graham?"

Aunt Gracia's tone was sternly solemn, and she bent a searching gaze into the dark, hollow eyes that looked up at her.

"You are right: he answered, after a moment. "No; I was not: but there were good Christian men, genuine God-fearing men, who were in it all."

"Yes; but one thing is certain, that this nation need not have had that war, if she had done God's work from the beginning. If she had been in the world as Christ was, and if her laws and customs had been conformed to His will."

"But Christ was killed, and—"

"Nay, verily: He said, 'no man taketh my life.' He laid it down himself. And no man can kill thee, if thee does truly belong to God. He has promised that thou shalt live forever, never die, if the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ be in thee."

"And you take that literally?"

"I take God's word in its plain meaning, that is all. It is when thee tries to explain things that need no explanation, that thee gets into trouble."

"But—maybe I am dull—but everybody must die: Christ did die."

"How?"

"Why, in the natural way, of course, by the spirit leaving the body."

"O-o-o, and thee calls that death? Dead things can't get away; only live things take leave, child: truly we shall all die as Christ did, if we are willing to live as He did, by the Spirit of God, and not alone by the bread we eat. If we live only by eating, or in the physical sense, we shall never know life at all. But if I begin to say what I think about this, I do not know when I shall get home, and thee needs rest now."

"Oh, don't stop! it means life or death to me; healing, everything is in it," he cried, lifting himself, eagerly.

"That is true, Aunt Gracia," said Hortense. "You know there are times when the heart must have rest or there can be none anyhow. Tell us all, if it takes all night."

"Yes, I understand; I believe thee. I felt like going on, but I cannot say it in a few moments. I wanted to say it, not only for thee, thyself, but for the child. I want thee to know what God expects of thee for the little new life."

"O, that is what I am almost dying for," cried the sick man. "That burden is more than I can bear."

Aunt Gracia turned to the little window garden and took a small pot, in which a white lily bloomed.

"Now," she said, "here is this lily; it shall be our text and sermon. I will try to translate its language for thee."

Hortense wiped her tears away, and with her chin in her handkerchief, looked up.

"Hortense, what was the very first beginning of this beautiful blossom?"

"Oh, the bulb: is that what you mean?"

"Yes, dear: that was what you began with in growing it. Tell me what it was like; what was its condition?"

"It was dry; just a brown dry lump."

"On the outside: yes: the husk. But what was inside of it?"

"Inside of it? O-o-o! Why the lily: everything that has grown out from it: I see! Charley,

do you see ? It is beautiful to think of ! ” and her face grew luminous.

“ Yes, it is beautiful. The secret, however, is not on the surface, and is worth searching for. The truth locked up in this plant is for thee and thy children, if thee will truly work together with God. How many parts were folded up in the bulb ? ”

Silence.

“ What did thee do with it first ? ”

“ Why, put it in the earth. ”

“ Then what did it do, first of all ? ”

“ F-i-r-s-t—of—all ? Why—began—to—grow. O-o-o—roots first ; it sent down roots. ”

“ Down ? Why not up ? ”

“ B-e-c-a-u-s-e roots must grow down, always down. ”

“ Why ? ”

“ It’s their nature : can’t do any other way. ”

“ All right. Mark that. And then what happened ? ”

“ The stalk came up, and leaves. ”

“ Why up ? ”

“ Because they must grow up, it’s their nature. ”

“ How far up ? ”

“ How far up ? O, I see ! To the point where the bud began to form the lily part. ”

“ Yes. And suppose thee had continually nipped the buds, as fast as they started, what then ? ”

“ There would have been no lily. ”

“ How then does thee get a lily from the bulb ? ”

“ By letting it grow. ”

“ Yes, just letting the life in it have its natural

way. Now thee sees there are three parts in this plant. The trinity principle is manifest in everything that has life, and comes to perfection, as far as I have been able to find out. Here you have shut up in the bulb the root which must grow downward, if at all, that it may lay hold of the earth, and draw from it the things which this element has to feed it with. The root in the lily answers to the body, the flesh in us. Its nature tends to the earth; not because it is of necessity corrupt; but because that is the law of God written in it. It is of the earth, earthy. Thee could not turn the bulb in any position in the ground, so that its roots would grow upward; neither could thee plant it in any way so the stalk would grow down. If that grows at all it must be up, toward the light. This corresponds to the soul, or intellect in man, which is immortal, of necessity, because the law of its life is up, out of the plane of the earthy. Take the root out above the earth line, and it will dry up and be as if dead. The flesh must eat of the earth, it cannot feed on things of the intellect and spirit. Put the stalk below the earth line and it rots and decays. The intellect cannot eat meat—its food is of a different nature, of necessity. The body and soul do not make the perfect man, he is destined to a yet higher plane. As long as he is but body and soul, he is at the best but two-thirds of a man. When does this plant reach perfection?"

"When it blooms," said Hortense, a sweet awe coming into her face.

"And by blooming makes a new bulb possible. The instinct of the white blossom, so to speak, is in

the dry bulb. Give it a chance, with all conditions met, and the blossom will come. The force of the life in it will spring up beyond the earth line into the sweet freedom of the spiritual. Nip the bud and the life never comes up beyond the soul or intellect. If you prevent the blooming, what of the plant ? ”

“O—I see—how dreadful ! more stalk and leaf : the less spirit the more flesh, with all its earthliness. I don’t like to think of that.”

“It is well to think of it all, for the sake of the child, as well as thine own. What must be given to the lily plant to make the blossom possible ? ”

“Sunlight, air, water.”

“Yes: the sweet influence of heaven. So God, by his Spirit, must work in flesh and intellect the work by which the spiritual is born ; then only is man a whole : then only has he eyes to see the kingdom of heaven. Those of whom Paul speaks as dead in sin, are those whose life has not yet come above the earth line. Sin came and nipped us, and keeps us down by constant nipping, until we, by the Will which has its seat in the soul, shall allow the Spirit of God to have his way in us. Then we shall put on Christ. The most terrible condition I can imagine would be that of the intellect growing at the expense of the spirit, to all eternity. All immortal, but all gross, feeding upon the things of imagination, and speculation, and assumption, shut away from the light, and air, and dew of heaven, without even a hope of the white completeness of the spiritual. This is what it would be to die eternally. For us mothers, there is one terrible, but grand truth in this. We

have it in our power to insure the growth of the spiritual in our children from the beginning. There comes a time, of course, when the responsibility of what this life is, comes upon every individual; for God will not let one life so spoil another that it shall eternally suffer without remedy; but so wonderfully broad and rich are the provisions of God for us, that if we fail to insure for our children the best things from their birth, we are just as responsible as though we had robbed them of their last chance. This truth slew me once when I came to know it. O what my poor boy has lost through my failure! I could not bear it now, but that I have given it to God with all my sin. God's opportunity for the race is in us mothers, and only as we come up into the heavenly mindedness which is betokened by this perfected lily, so that we may truly represent Christ, who is the Lily of the Valley, are we fit for the sacred work of motherhood."

"Or fatherhood," whispered Charles Graham.

"True, or fatherhood."

"God help us, then!"

"He will: if we will let Him; help us by the infusion of His own life and power, which shall be able to overcome all things, even death. The dying in which the spiritual is cut off, or nipped down, so that the life is simply natural, the supernatural all left out, is the only real sort. As the perfection of the lily always produces a new bulb; so the new birth into the spiritual makes a new body, which planted in the more congenial soil of heaven, shall never be in danger of the nipping process; but may grow after the

law of perfect development, unhindered. As you said a while ago, we shall all die as Christ did, if we live as He did, by the Spirit of God, and not alone by the bread we eat; and to die as He did, is not to die at all. Deathless: too "quick" for death to catch, we shall go away with the Holy Ghost, out of the old bulb that must dissolve into the earth where it grew, to the full glorious life which is like His eternally. If we are willing to suffer with Him, that is endure our share of the work of redeeming the kingdom to God, we shall share with Him in the glory of the life, which death cannot touch. The flesh of Christ knew no corruption, for it was never nipped by sin. That is the difference between His and ours."

"The teaching is grand, Aunt Gracia," said Charles Graham: "but you must be patient with my 'buts:' I know so little, I want to know so much. Now, He was divine: we are human: that makes such a difference."

"Yes: but He was also human, under the control of the divine, was He not?"

"Yes, and yet so different from us: and in just that difference lies the difficulty."

"And yet that is no difficulty that God cannot overcome, when He gets us into His hands. Turn to Romans eighth, seventeenth; speaking of those who will be led by the Spirit of God, the book says they are the sons of God; and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we will do our share of the work; that we, Christ and we, may be glorified together. Now what are joint-heirs, Charles?"

“Those who share equally : to take it in its literal, legal meaning.”

“Or, in other words, just as it means, without any effort to explain it away. The teaching is that if we will faithfully bear our share in the service which belongs to all the children of God, as Christ bore His share, we shall have just as free access to all the resources which supported His humanity.”

“O, Aunt Gracia, where will that lead us? Just think!” cried Charles, almost in alarm.

“I have thought. I know where thee finds trouble: it is in forgetting that not one of us has the same work to do that He had. For His work there was required a body, soul, and spirit, such as no generation of man could have given Him. He was supplied with appliances suitable for His work, and we shall be for ours. The same Spirit that raised up Christ from the dead, must come into our vile bodies and quicken them, from dead works, to holiness and Christlikeness. Suppose He had just the work to do that thee has; that He was really in thy place, with nothing more required of Him than is of thee: thee can suppose this?”

“Easily.”

“Well, if thee will be a true representative of Him to the best of thy ability, walk as He walked,* pure as He is pure, love as He loved, obey as He obeyed, serve as He served, overcome as He overcame, belong to the world only as He did, take what it gives

* 1 John ii. 6; iii. 3-16; St. John xiii. 34; xv. 20; Matt. xx. 27, 28; 1 Pet. iv. 1; 1 John v. 4; St. John xvii. 15, 16; 1 Pet. ii. 20, 23.

you as He did ; then thee shall have the same measure of the Spirit that would be given Him, in such a case. To get at the whole blessed truth just a little nearer, perhaps : if it could be that one poor sinner had been forgotten in the plan of atonement, and God should need another Son of Man, through whom to save that lost one, and He should call thee to that office, He would give thee all that would be needed to overcome all the human imperfections, and make thy work as complete as was Christ's. And it would take more of God's power for thee, than for Him. For the infirmities of sin in this world have to be overcome : there is less real, true man in thee, so there must be the more of God."

"The less man, the more God !"

"Yes : for thee must be presented faultless by-and-by before the glory of the Father, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. And this must be by the putting off and putting on process that it tells about in the third of Colossians ; read it by-and-by, and see."

"I will ; but this is wonderful ! The less man, the more God ! I can't take it all in at once."

"Of course not. Thee can only consent to follow Christ truly ; beled by the Spirit that led Him from Jordan, when he showed His subordination ; through the wilderness, when He fathomed temptation the source of sin ; to the Cross, where He suffered abandonment to the law. Thee can only consent to share all things with Him like a true brother, as He did with thee. Give Him all of thyself, as He gave thee all of Himself."

"I believe I have done that, Aunt Gracia, as well as I know how. As we have been talking, I have yielded every point as far as I know. I suppose though there are many things involved in it that I don't dream of yet; but to the best of my ability from this time I shall be in this world as He is. That settles the question of my ever going back into that grocery unless they will put the tobacco out of it. I cannot think of Christ standing behind that counter, and selling that filthy stuff. I must look for a clean place to work, when I get strong."

"Thee might cleanse the old place, though; they are professing Christians; thee may be used of God to make them see the truth."

"I fear not; tobacco-soaked, both of them, and —"

"Need light, eh, Charles?"

"Indeed they do."

"Well, hear this in John twelve, forty-six: 'I am come a light into the world;' and in Matthew five, fourteenth: Christ draws the parallel: 'Ye are the light of the world.' Supposing thee should take thy little light, and set it down in that darkness. Oh, I have often wondered what would have been the condition of the world to-day, if every man and woman who has professed Christ from first to last, had been crowned with the pentecostal flame, and had gone out with its electric glory shining wherever he went, the world would have been so full of light by this time, that there would not be found a place dark enough for the wolves and bats of vice to hide. And as for unbelief, it could no more stay than the

darkness of midnight could linger in the presence of a cloudless noonday. The one thing all the world needs is the constant shining of consistent Christian living. It is in the dark, poor world, because in the place where there should be set a plant for light, there is the smoke-stack, belching forth the clouds of doubt and mistrust. Charles, see to it that thee is a light, not a smoke-stack."

"I'll try hard, Aunt Gracia."

"As thee gets able to go about again among men, look up at the point from which the ways go out, and see where Christ goes before thee. He will not walk in two ways. If thee don't like the way He goes in, thee cannot bribe or force Him to leave it, and go with thee; so thee must go over to Him, cost what it will, or go alone. If thee chooses to turn aside to some indulgence, some hour of selfish pleasure, remember thee must leave Christ in the only safe way, and take the side track, over which hangs the danger signal. Thee knows not what may happen thee between the place where thee left Christ, and the place of self-indulgence, to cut off forever thy chance of eternal life."

"O Aunt Gracia!" cried Hortense, "who then can be saved? You have set the standard so high it discourages me."

"Child, I have not touched the standard: God put it beyond the reach of even an angel to set it high or low. I have only pointed thee to it; thee must take it as God set it. It shuts us into close quarters, of course; unless thee gets out of self into Christ, then there is room enough. It is just this; thee can't be-

long to the Kingdom of Heaven, and of this world at the same time. The same international law that obtains between all governments, must be recognized here. If thee were an Englishman, and wanted to become a citizen of America, with all rights, thee must take out naturalization papers, and swear to forsake the old country, and cast in thy lot with the new, even to taking up arms in her defence, against even thy native country. Thee must move out of the world bag and baggage, into a Christian life, and be willing to share with the children of God, and thee'll find the way made clear, and all resources at hand. It's only when one tries to belong to the Kingdom of Heaven and yet live in the world, that one finds it hard work. The new birth is like the naturalization papers, which makes thee a citizen of this Kingdom. The life within will take care of its outer manifestation. A dog wears hair, a bird feathers, because of the secret locked up in the blood. The apple tree bears apples, the pear tree pears, for the same reason. Everything outward depends upon the inside life. You remember Christ's lesson about the branch and the vine. If a branch is cut off, its only chance of fruit is to buy it in the market and tie it on with strings. There are two ways of putting on Christianity; one is the living apple-tree method, and the Christmas-tree way—tied on with strings, or produced by the life in the divine root. It is one thing to profess to be a Christian, and another to be born again."

The dusk had fallen. Aunt Gracia had been putting on her wraps as she talked, and with a hasty good-bye, took her leave.

Charles and Hortense sat amazed and silent ; until at last she said, in a hushed tone :

“ Oh—to be and live all that ! ”

“ To not be and live it, wife,” he answered, “ that is what seems so dreadfully solemn to me.”

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CHAPTER X.

THE old lesson came back to-day, with new force to Hortense, as she sat dreaming out the past, by the fire. The sweet old lesson, that they coned over and over through all the months of slow recovery. How slow they seemed then, but they were valuable. She remembered how they studied the ethics of a home, and the philosophy of practical Christian life, and came to the true, intelligent consecration of all their powers to God. His law was established as the law of their home in all things ; and they each endeavored, in spite of physical infirmities, nervousness, with its attendant demoralization, to compel self to come into complete subordination. These were no play-day tasks, as she remembered well, nor could she forget the failures : as to the outer life, there seemed to be much more of failure than success, but the purpose and the effort remained real and true. During this time their Philip came to them, a beautiful dark-eyed cherub, with wondrous lights and shadows in his face from the first. The advent of this boy was to Charles Graham an occasion of solemn retrospection.

“ If it might have pleased God to have kept him with Himself a while yet, until I had learned my lesson,

and become a better man, I should have been glad," he said to Aunt Gracia, as she laid the child in his arms.

"Well: now that he is here, thee must work with God to the undoing of thyself in him and the building in of the divine."

"I feel the responsibility of it, I assure you," he said, laying the little one on his breast, "and I have been humbled before God because of the past. I am abashed before these two, she and my God, and this child, who must hold me responsible."

* * * *

It had been arranged that as soon as Mr. Graham should be able he should enter the factory with his brother-in-law as partner, investing service, in lieu of capital.

The relation between him and Hortense Date had always been of the most formal nature. Hortense had divided rather than united the two men; for the money-getting brother had not been pleased with his sister's marriage to a poor man, and it was alone because of his relation to the family, that he had taken her husband into his business. But Charles Graham had proven himself worthy of any trust Horace Date had to bestow; and so a relation, pleasant enough for business purposes, had sprung up between them, but nothing more.

Mr. Date held the Christian profession and the friendship of the Weldons, in profound contempt. He was unsparing in ridicule of Aunt Gracia, with her plain speech and dress, and pony cart, and old-fashioned husband. And the family arrangements in his

sister's home were ever a source of criticism and mirth. He seemed to regard the children that came to them in the course of the years, as fore-ordained to useless thriftlessness, because they were kept out of the street, and taught politeness in deportment and chastity of language.

He could only ridicule, for he knew only the wisdom of this world, to which the wisdom of God is foolishness. Of the deep-sea soundings of the life lived in the Graham cottage, he never dreamed; and to have told it, would have required language to which he was dead.

The things which Horace Date could not have understood, I want to make plain to my reader. In attempting to do this, we shall but follow Hortense in retrospection. She was thinking about one Sabbath day when Clementine was just beginning to smile into the faces about her. The young parents sat talking together about the children: Hortense holding the baby, while Philip stood between his father's knees, himself but little more than a baby.

"I would not like my daughter to have the life in her home that I had in mine," she said. "I could not bear that she should ever feel the indifference to her mother that I do, in spite of everything I can do, toward mine."

"No, certainly;" said her husband, "your life was strangely shut out."

He was playing with the baby's fingers.

"It makes me cold to think of it," she said. "I never had any talks with my mother, such as some of my friends tell about. I was left to experiment

with life ; and made some terrible mistakes. I wonder that some awful moral disaster did not befall me. O Charley ! we must be more to our children than we either of us found anywhere."

" I have often thought the same thing," he said ; " I have an idea of what a boy needs which I never found, and have always longed for. My father's death was a great loss to me. My mother would have done all she could for me, if there had been any way for me to stay at home ; and yet, as I remember back, I know that she never talked to us children ; she fed us, and made our clothes, and kept us clean, and that was all. She gave us, though, all she knew how to give. Not one of us can do more, and God must supply the rest. I shall have to learn everything of what a father ought to be to his daughter. You will be a good mother, though, to the little blossom, Horry—I can see that."

Hortense would never forget the reverence with which he looked into her face as he said this.

She had her misgivings, but out of the fulness of her heart, she answered :

" I want to be ; " and pressed the delicate baby face to her cheek, and broke into a sudden merry peal of laughter, as the little mouth opened on her chin, and the warm tongue and lips asked in their mute sign language for something to eat.

" O what a little animal you are ! " she cried, laying the baby on her knee, and tantalizing the hungry mouth with kisses. " The sweetest little animal that ever breathed, but only sensuous, after all. Isn't it strange, Charles, what we are, to begin with."

"Do you remember about the bulb and its lesson?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed, and the nipping. There must be no nipping here—not a bit of nipping, baby; baby, do you hear? You are all bulb yet, but you must grow into a lily whiter than snow." Then to her husband, as she drew the little one to her breast and settled down in her chair, rocking gently to and fro: "One thing I have settled already: she shall never be left in ignorance, as I was. She shall learn from me everything I know. I am going to have her learn to keep house, do everything about it. She shall begin just as soon as she can walk. Do you know, Charley, I have it all planned: and I've been so afraid I might not live until she came and I had time to carry it all out. It would be too bad to have such a lovely scheme fail."

They both laughed, and little Clem turned her face up and crowed.

"Maybe," said Charles, "this consideration will make you think to put on your rubbers."

"O what a man you are! Can you never forget my failings? I have begun, you know I have."

"Yes, that's so; you shall have all the credit that is due. But seriously, that is one thing that should be made a matter of principle. Parents have no right to neglect health, and so run the risk of leaving their children for others to bring up."

"I believe that."

"And to me this is another strong argument against the use of alcoholics, or narcotics, or anything that makes health and life any less secure. As

I see my own obligations in these days, if I had not, as a matter of Christian cleanliness, given up my tobacco, I should do it as a right which my children demand of me. I would give my right hand to-day, if it would take away the terrible fear that haunts me, that I didn't stop soon enough for Philip's sake."

The little boy, who had not yet begun to speak plainly, turned his wondrous face up at the mention of his name. His father bent down and kissed his mouth, while a strange heavy pain went through his heart, which caused him to draw the child closely to his breast.

Hortense remembered just how troubled was the face of her husband; and her heart went out painfully after the absent boy. She wondered if the fear or the hope which hovered over the precious life of their first-born, would be realized?

Her husband's voice went on in her memory dream :

"Fletcher—you know he has a son a few months older than our girl. We had a talk about the two babies one day in the engine-room. I went in to offer my congratulations, and we got to talking over old army times, and a little of everything came in for mention. He uses the greatest quantity of tobacco; chews; and that is too disgusting. Ever since I stopped smoking it makes me sick to be in close proximity to him. And then, you know, with the zeal of a convert, I felt obliged to give him a bit of experience and advice, so I fired off my little temperance gun at him."

"Did it hit?" laughed Hortense.

"As to that, I am afraid it only rattled against his armor of selfishness."

"I pity his wife," she said. "Such a weak, slender little thing, with her three children, and—such—a—s—m—e—double ell—excuse me!—to endure every time he comes into the house."

"You are excusable, dear; but have you quite forgotten how close you came to having the same kind of a nuisance about? I could pound myself when I think how I palmed myself off on you for a clean man."

"O Charley! I knew you smoked, but—"

"O yes, I understand: thank you, dear, for your gentle courtesy; but you are not sorry I stopped."

"No indeed! I was so glad, so thankful to God."

"Yes, I dare say. Oh, we men are miserable excuses, we are. I told Fletcher so. I told him we hadn't any right to compel our wives to breathe the kind of atmosphere these habits surround a man with. I told him, too, about the law of heredity, its arbitrariness, and that he would find a harvest by-and-by, somewhere, from his tobacco planting, that he would not like to gather in."

"I suppose he believed you."

"He just laughed and sneered, as he always does. He's a disagreeable fellow, any way."

"Everybody says so; but he is always courteous to me."

"I know. His reverence for you is peculiar, considering the man. Of course I have a fellowship for him—we cannot forget what he did when I was left wounded on the field."

"No indeed, and we must do as much for him, risk something for his sake."

"That's a fact, Horry. He did run a risk to lag under the enemy's fire, and get me the water. No water ever tasted as that did: and then to staunch the wound. I believe I should have died but for him. We must be everything we can to them all."

"I think so too. I must get out to see her oftener, poor woman! Is he pleased with his boy?"

"As pleased as a boy with a dog."

"Why, Charley!"

"Fact! It impressed me just that way. He holds his girls in contempt, just because they are girls; but if he don't find something beside contempt in order, toward that Bessie of his, I shall wonder."

"She is a remarkable child."

"Indeed she is; and wonderfully like her father; but he doesn't seem to recognize any value in her yet. He has a sort of selfish, unreasoning satisfaction in his boy, just because he is a boy, which is—well—really brute-like. He has no principle about anything; professes to be an atheist: doesn't believe in the soul. So there is no foundation for any real love for his children. He is a candidate for transformation if there ever was one."

"Did he have no teaching as a child?"

"Teaching enough, but of such an arbitrary sort that it was worse than nothing. I do not want to make such a mistake with my boy."

From the recollection of this remark, Hortense Graham found herself dwelling upon this family—the long story which her husband told her about the early

life of this man came back freshly. It appeared that his father was a stern, religious man, with a strain of fanaticism in him. He had once made a vow in keeping of which he set Maurice apart from his birth for the ministry ; and with more zeal than knowledge tried to bend him to his will. As the boy grew he gave signs of a gift for scientific application, and desired to study for an engineer. His father would not consent : considered it a profane thing, inasmuch as he had consecrated him to God. Science was, he believed, of the devil, and there ensued a rupture between father and son which resulted in the profane, drunken, atheistic engineer, whose whole heart, embittered by this experience, held in absolute hatred everything pertaining to the faith his father had professed.

Maurice found his way to a school of Technology from which he would have graduated in a few months but for the great uprising which took men from plow, office, and school. He had therefore but little experience to commend him, but in the first letter from her husband written by his hospital nurse, mention was made of the peculiar kindness shown him by this man on the field, when he had fallen. And from that moment Maurice Fletcher had one friend. With grateful haste she sought the family out, on learning of their arrival, and at once undertook to interest her brother in his behalf. So well did she represent the matter, that a place was found for him in a small establishment, where he had opportunity to prove his ability ; and when a vacancy occurred in Mr. Date's factory, Fletcher was brought to fill the posi-

tion, which he had done with great satisfaction. When they first came to Clifton, Mrs. Fletcher was a fair young bride ; and, aside from this fact, a very interesting woman. She had evidently been delicately reared ; but had brought to her new life a purpose to be a helpful wife in all things. Her husband was grimly attentive to her, but in no sense tender, or even thoughtful. He secured a suite of rooms on the second floor of a tenement, in a very undesirable portion of the city, assuring Mrs. Graham that it was but a temporary arrangement ; a make-shift simply, until a suitable home could be found.

Madaline Fletcher cheerfully accepted the unpromising surroundings, willing to begin in the most humble way the life she was to share with the husband, whom she had literally left all to follow. She only wished they might have been entirely by themselves. She did not like the neighbors. But even this did not bring discontent to the heart, or complaint from the lips, of the sweet loyal wife. Not even Hortense Graham, was permitted to hint to her, that everything was not just as lovely as it could be. It was the best Maurice could do just at first, she was sure ; but by-and-by, when he was established in his profession, and had time to look about, all would be made comfortable. His true love would devise all things for her happiness ; he would always want to do for her more than he really could. He was not a demonstrative man : he did not make any fuss over her ; but, she must be very reasonable and patient, and not worry him.

She made use of her own skilful hands and ele-

gant taste to make the place a home. It was well for her that she had skill, taste, and patience, and could make a home out of the miserable place, for it seemed likely to be all she would ever know on this side of heaven. Here had been born her children, six of them, five girls: Bessie, then Marianna, about the age of Philip, then Hartley, the only boy, and after him, three more girls. All there in the little close rooms, in which, growing yearly less like a home, patient Madaline was dragging out the days. She had at last become so weary, that she had no strength to wish for a change. Hortense felt her heart sink as she thought about this woman and her children.

As the years had passed it had become known that Maurice Fletcher drank, as well as made inordinate use of the filthy weed; and that he also was a passionate gambler. His drinking was moderate enough, not to endanger his value as engineer, in those conservative days of ignorance; but he had become known as a disagreeable fellow; coarse, a scoffer of so unpleasant a species, that even men of the world shunned him, and everybody wondered how it could ever have been, that so sweet a Christian woman, as Madaline Fletcher, should be cursed with such a husband.

Charles Graham once, in talking with Aunt Gracia about it, made mention of it as a "strange dispensation of providence."

"A dispensation of providence!" cried she, in her ringing tones, "call it rather a dispensation of folly-

The trouble is not in Providence, but in the man she chose to marry ! ”

Hortense did not even smile as she recalled these words. The blessedness of her own life, set that of Madeline in such sharp and sorrowful contrast, that she wept. The children, Bessie, mature beyond her years, saucy and defiant ; Marianna, Annie for short, by nature sweet like her mother, but soured ; unattractive Hartley, with his father's selfish nature ; Junietta, called June, but anything but June-like in her weak peevishness ; and the two little ones, old wizzen faces, known as “ Fletcher's young ones,” in the neighborhood, untaught street waifs—Hortense turned sick as she thought them over.

Her own children, Philip, Clementine, Benny, came before her in vivid contrast ; and while she wept, her heart was comforted that her lot had been heaven-appointed, and heaven-blest.

She longed to take some of the bloom and gladness, such as heaven had granted to her darlings, and thus enrich these poor children of sorrow. She longed to send some gentle restraining influence into the life of black-eyed, spirited Bessie. The girl had warranted in her development, the estimate made of her as a little child. She was really the strength of the house, in this day of its history. Self-reliant, brave, bold in her defence of the shrinking, broken-hearted mother, to a degree that compelled admiration, while it was cause for anxiety to her friends, and a constant irritation to her father.

These contemplations were so painful to Hortense

Graham, that at length, with a determined effort, she tried to dismiss the Fletchers entirely from her thought. She could not afford to dwell upon these scenes of wretchedness; rather would she let her mind stay itself upon the tokens of the better portion which God had granted her.

CHAPTER XI.

HORTENSE had not far to search to find elements of happy thought. Her little daughter's work-basket was enough to give her a start back, to the blessed memories of that Sabbath day's talk with her husband.

As she then told him, she had long before determined that if she ever had a daughter, she should be taught by herself, everything which should be requisite to make her a strong, pure, self-reliant, sensible woman. When, therefore, she came, the little daughter was ushered into a school at her birth.

Father and mother both agreed that they would be beforehand in all things with Clementine, as with all the children that should come to them. The first thing she was to learn, was confidence in her parents; and studiously did they seek to be qualified by truth in the inward part to teach this.

She was taught that God was the Father in their home: the Ruler in all things. His Word the dictum by which they should each alike be governed. Each child was to reckon himself responsible to God alone, as were father and mother, for the manner in which each dealt by the other. The child was taught that she could have anything she wanted, that was in

harmony with God's will ; but that his love for her was great enough to refuse anything that would bring harm, no matter how much she cried for it, and called it praying. That His will is arbitrary, because it is love. That He is determined to make her glad, in spite of all things that could bring sorrow ; and to do this, He must have His own way with her. That if she gets hurtful things, she must get them of somebody beside God, and against His will ; that disobedience is the only thing that can ever get her into real trouble. Each child was taught the mission of his own will. No arbitrary decisions were made for them. Each was to have his own way ; time and pains being taken to make him understand the right and the wrong of the matter : then he must make his own decision, and take the consequences. If he found from results that an unwise choice had been made, and would frankly acknowledge it, he had father and mother to help him correct, or to endure that which could not be repaired. These teachings, of course, extended through years ; coming in the regular course of the simple home life.

One incident that Hortense recalled that day with a sigh, and a smile, will serve to illustrate how this was done, and also to make us somewhat acquainted with the community in this home.

Philip was five, and Benny was two and a half, while Clementine was between them in age.

Philip, with the face of an embryo saint, so sweet and winsome, but unusually small and delicate, at least two years in advance of his size, his dark eyes now beaming like gems, with hearts of fire ; now liquid

as a still shadowed pool in the forest ; while Benny was a great, robust, rollicking, blue-eyed athlete, far more animal than spirit. Already the younger brother was trenching in his growth upon the rights of the elder. The parents delighted in the sweetness of Philip, with wondering, silent gladness, but openly rejoiced in the strength of Benny. Philip had taken great pride in the baby sister, and had manifested the dawn of the chivalric man, in his little heart, in the cunning air of protection with which he followed her about from the first. He enjoyed baby Benny ; and served in the office of elder brother, loyally, until his pride, somehow, sometime, no one knew just how or when, took alarm at his defiance of the years between them, and, as if with the stride of a young giant, began to step over the distance and threaten to go past, leaving Philip behind. People who dropped in were always making remarks about little Philip and big Benny—and before father or mother dreamed of it, the unlovely spirit of envy had already begun to write his suspicions on the beautiful brow and lips of the boy.

One Saturday evening, Nora, in laying out the clothing for the children to put on in the morning, remarked to Philip, who was standing near :

“ Benny ’ll be in trousers first, Philip, if ye don’t be afther looking out. Ye better been a girl, if ye can’t grow like a boy.”

The boy’s eyes blazed, then grew sullen ; his lips dropped, and he turned to look at Benny, who came romping in at that moment, with a proud defiance, which unfortunately no one was there to see, and read.

From that time all the evening, during the talk and prayer, before retiring, Hortense saw that something was strangely wrong with Philip. She spoke to her husband about it, but there was no way open to the cause. She watched him closely, tenderly; and noticed that he did not sleep as early as usual; but she did not notice that he lay with unchildlike tears wetting his pillow, and that he purposely kept away from Benny, in the bed which they shared together.

In the morning, as usual, the three children climbed, for an early romp, into their father's bed. Philip had preempted his broad chest as a throne, and there had sat and reigned over all, until Benny challenged his right. A merry, innocent battle for its possession had been waged—Benny's strength making it by no means a light matter for Philip to keep the place, which he had considered his own by right. Sometimes he had magnanimously yielded to the little ones, always to Clementine, and to Benny until he was "big Ben," but he would not allow himself to be unseated, by strength, without a struggle. The struggle, however, had begun. Morning by morning it was renewed, and Charles Graham noticed of late, with pain, that an unlovely cloud settled over Philip's beautiful face, as he felt the force of the strongly knit, firm little body of his brother, pushing against him for his seat.

With fatherly tact and God-given wisdom he had as yet been able to prevent a crisis, but it was inevitable; and on this Sabbath morning it came. Whether it was because Philip had lost, and Benny

gained disproportionately during the night, from some cause, as soon as Philip had taken his seat just over the fond, tender heart of his father, Benny, with a scream of baby joy, in his perfect strength and health, came against him with all his fresh vigor, and threw him, face downward, to the farther side of the bed. Clementine clapped her hands, and Charles Graham cried :

“ There, sir ! You young giant ; you have done it at last, have you ? ”

Benny shouted, and jumped up and down on the throne, to which he had succeeded by virtue of simple physical force. Philip lay still for a moment, and then drawing himself up with a determined tension in every limb, and his teeth set, and his eyes stern and dark in their passion, he threw himself forward on to Benny in what it was evident was no innocent, frolicksome warfare.

“ Philip, my son ! ”

The father’s tone was stern with surprise and pain. “ You wouldn’t be angry, my child, at little brother ? ”

“ But I want my place—my own place.”

“ My place ! ” cried Benny, gurgling with triumph and clapping his hands.

“ Here is room for you both : papa belongs to you both, just alike ; here, Philip,” and he took hold of him to draw him to a seat beside Benny.

“ Me too,” chimed in Clementine, clambering over from the place on her father’s feet, from which she had watched the unusual scrimmage.

“ Yes : me too. Come on ! here, Philip.”

But Philip drew back, and the cloud deepened.

Papa drew on Philip's hand, but the child resisted. After a moment, in which they looked into each other's eyes, out of the spirit which was in them, Mr. Graham released his hold, and said,

"Very well, my son: come when you are ready."

"I never will!" cried the child, giving a spring, and a fling, which landed him out on the floor.

"Come to mamma, darling," cried Hortense, from her little dressing-room, from which she had been an interested spectator.

Philip turned and looked at her a minute, as if weighing the proposition, and then with another fling, he cried out angrily:

"No: I don't love you: not one of you; I won't live with you any more; I will go right off—now."

Hortense laughed at first at this outburst of pigmy wrath: but as she caught the look of pain in her husband's face, she was sobered; and began to realize that it was no laughing matter. Then she tried to reason with him; but he would not listen—he would not be won back by loving words, but repelled all her tender advances.

"I'm going right off," he said, "see if I don't; I don't want to stay here."

Mr. Graham's first thought, as he saw the purpose of the child, was to compel his return and subordination; but after a moment of rapid thinking, he concluded to follow the divine method; so he said:

"Well, mamma, if our little boy will run off in the cold, outside, he must go. We can't compel him to love us: he can't be happy with a papa and mamma he doesn't love. Come back, Philip, darling!"

Clementine enforced the plea by beginning to cry, and Benny, who had slipped to the floor, came toward him. Philip answered with an angry snarl, and ran to the outer door. It was still bolted. He jerked the knob ; then hit the panel with his tiny fist.

"Now you tant do ! door won't open !" exclaimed Benny, in a tone of triumphant satisfaction.

"I will go ! I won't stay !" and he pounded again, harder than before.

The matter began to look very serious, but Charles Graham answered, while Hortense stood bewildered :

"Nothing shall compel our little boy to stay, if he will go," and he came and slipped the bolt, and stepped back and waited.

The child opened the door, paused a moment, as the cold, bitter weather struck him in the face, then stepped boldly from the threshold to the stone step, white with ice and snow. Just one little second of surprise and alarm as the door swung to behind him, shutting him out into the dark of the winter morning, then cries within and without.

"O-o-o-o, papa," and his father's arms were about him ; brother, sister, mamma, all with embraces and tears and kisses, clustering warmly about him. He clung to his father : snuggled in his breast, and was taken back into the warm bed. The other children clambered back ; and they all cuddled closely together until called to be dressed.

The lesson was never wholly forgotten. It had an evident influence on them all ; but from that time

Philip knew that he was only suffered to take his old seat by his younger brother's loving favor ; for whenever strength insured pre-eminence, Benny was before him. How these things galled and fretted the little life, no one really knew. And yet from the developments of that Sabbath morning enough was revealed to cause the parents to be very jealous of the comfort of the weaker brother ; and Benny was taught to make his strength the servant of Philip's weakness—and Philip was taught to cultivate in himself the strength of God, to make good his lack.

When Philip was seven, he had a severe illness which left him debilitated and nervous, and the doctor recommended that he and Benny should be sent to the grandmother's farm in New England for a couple of years at least, and after much thoughtful consideration it was decided to do so ; hence it happened that Clementine was left to grow out of her babyhood alone, with her mother for a companion. Hortense improved these passing days with her little daughter. She taught her the care of her own person, and clothing, and bed ; so that while she was but a mere toddling she was quite independent of assistance from mother or Nora. She was taught to serve others. Her mother did nothing for herself that Clementine could easily do for her ; and in turn she served her, instead of leaving her to simply attend to her " own self," according to the maxim of her early home. Hortense thought that to leave her child to self-service, no matter how necessary, how thoroughly taught, would cultivate in her undesirable traits of character ; while the opposite course

of mutual helpfulness. would develop unselfishness, and habituate her to the gentle tasks of ministering, so grateful in womanhood.

She was provided with a complete outfit of kitchen and dining utensils, in size proportionate to her hands; and with these she began lessons in house-keeping. Nora almost idolized the lovely child, and was seldom in too great a hurry to have her about; so, with her little table, and dishwashing apparatus, broom, scrubbing brush, etcetera, she took her share in all the work, and thought it play. The children were counted in to all the domestic economy, so completely, that the misunderstandings which are so troublesome between servants, and even parents, and the children, and which make their efforts to be happy seem only mischief-making, were impossible in this house.

Was company expected, the children were consulted and utilized from the first. They were not left to the exercise of their own wits, to find out the meaning of mysterious preparations, which were of household interest. Neither were they sent away with unsatisfied curiosity about anything that raised a question. The sending from home of the little boys, deprived them of these healthful influences for a time, but Clementine was happy, in that nothing ever came between her and her parents' helpful, judicious love. Sitting upon her mother's knee, she was taught the holy secrets of human life, from the foundation of that Word of the Lord, which claims the body as His own temple. She was instructed concerning its furnishing for the work to be done in it,

and by it, in its relations to the world, and the necessity of intelligently working together with God, in the physical, as well as the spiritual world. It was often a matter of wonder to their parents that the minds of the little ones so readily grasped the things which are accounted deep, and the practical way in which they would apply the truth in their own little lives, and in observation of others.

Clementine was taught reading, writing, and drawing, by her mother, and the elements of the sciences, in these days when they were alone ; and in turn was to teach her brothers when they returned. She was given to understand that as the only sister, she had an especial mission to her brothers ; that they belonged to her, in one sense, just as truly as to father and mother. Philip, by his physical infirmities, and Benny by his fewer years, having each a peculiar claim upon her ; so that she must take care of herself for their sakes.

For some months before the boys went away, Clementine had prepared their early supper herself ; spreading the table with the pretty service ; Philip sitting to serve in his place, and each bearing a hand in the after clearing away. Visitors were always impressed by the cunning thrift of the little "house-mother," as papa called her ; but seemed to think that of necessity she must love some childish charm in the process of this training. But Hortense stoutly contended that she knew these simple duties, and the knowledge of the truth involved in her own being, could but develope in the young maiden charms which the idle dawdler,—full of feverish curiosity,

mysterious imaginings which she dare not mention to her mother, but whispered and giggled over with some other girl—could never approach. Speculations, moral or immoral, must never cast the shadow of distrust over her daughter's bright face ; and the contented, healthful life of the little woman, demonstrated the wisdom of the "Graham method."

One day Madeline Fletcher came, and sat an hour in this cosy sitting-room ; and while she chatted and listened, observed the quiet, orderly, yet busy movements of the children. At last she asked :

"How is it that your children are no trouble ? They never seem to get in your way."

"They never are in my way : they are always a help to me."

"Do tell me how you manage it."

"There's not much to tell, only—"

"How did you begin ?" interrupted Mrs. Fletcher.

"I began beforehand, and have lived for it ever since : that is all."

"Yes ?" sighed Mrs. Fletcher. "And your husband helps you ?"

"Yes indeed : we are agreed about it all."

"But children can't be depended on : they are so tricky."

"Tricky ?"

Hortense had a sharp word to follow this, but a look at the pale, worn face before her, checked it ; and she went on kindly—

"There is just this I think : we must be frank with them first. Now as you ask, I will just tell you a few

things that come to mind now. We never deceive the children: never suspect them: do not disparage their efforts: never boss them: never let them go with questions unanswered."

Unwittingly she had in this little resume touched upon the very points of failure in her friend's home.

"Do they—that is: they quarrel sometimes," faltered Madeline Fletcher.

"I dare say they would often, if left to themselves, when out of sorts. But if one begins to act peevish, we assume that he is sick: and he is: and treat him accordingly. Now, my Philip—"

"How's that?"

"Depends on circumstances, of course. As I began to say, Philip is a delicate, nervous child. Gets fretted easily, would have no end of trouble, if left to his own resources. The first thing is a bath, and loose gown; and cuddling. I give myself up to the touchy one for a time. Sometimes I take him to bed: if I am busy, as I nearly always am, I take some work, and sit by him, and keep him company, until he is soothed and sleeps. This is not a punishment, you know: but just a remedy. Sometimes I make the room dark: and if I can't take the time to stay by him, I run in once in a while for a minute, and brood him. This little plan works with my children. It always ends in a nice sleep, which cures the crossness."

"O, I wish I knew how to do it; but I guess I'm too nervous myself."

One must be restful in their own spirit, of course, to do anything with a fretful child."

"Restful! Ah me!" A choking sob almost strangled her; but she quickly rallied and burst forth passionately: "My children must be always sick, if that is what makes them troublesome. And Maurice cannot endure their noise. His work is wearing on him, and he must have quiet when he comes home. O, I am so afraid they will all turn out bad. I wish they were all boys, so they could be let out into the street safely."

"Why, Mrs. Fletcher!" gasped Hortense.

"Well, it is true, Mrs. Graham," said Mrs. Fletcher, quickly. "It is safer to bring up boys. They are not so apt to disgrace you, even if they don't do just right. Boys are not expected to be just so, like girls. If they do get to using bad words, and going into bad company, they seem to have a way of getting decently through the world in spite of it."

Hortense sat aghast—here was something new entirely. Mrs. Fletcher noted her amazement, and went on rapidly.

"I suppose we have all got to get reconciled to such things, just as all other mothers have."

"Reconciled to what?"

"Why, to having our children spoiled: and grow coarse, and old, and get into trouble, and disgrace, and kill you with sorrow."

"Madeline Fletcher! reconciled to that! no indeed! I never will be reconciled to anything that will do that."

"Of course we don't like it: but we'll have to bear it in our turn. All boys get wild: it's expected: and some girls."

“Well: I’ll never be reconciled to anything that will send my boys or girls back to me any less pure than I send them out.”

The remembrance of this talk came back to Hortense Graham with pain always—and now, in spite of her determination to think only of such things as brought good cheer, the whole sorrowful scene of disappointment and sin in her friend’s home, opened up before her, and brought unrest and burden, until she wished she could forget that there was such a woman as Madeline Fletcher.

CHAPTER XII.

MRS. GRAHAM was interrupted in her meditations by the ringing of the door-bell. In a moment Nora appeared, followed by a neighbor.

"I just knowed you'd want Mrs. Sloan to come right in, mum, so I brung her," explained the girl.

"That is right: I am very glad to see you, Mrs. Sloan."

Mrs. Sloan did not give her time to rise, but came quickly to her side, and stooping, gave her a sisterly greeting.

"I hadn't seen you in so long," she said, "not since the cold snap, and so I just said to Janie that I'd take my work right up as it was in my apron, and run over and sit awhile, and that I'd send Clement over to stay with her."

"I'm so glad you came, and Clement would be delighted to go over, but she's gone to Elmwood Farm."

"This cold day!"

"The cold will not hurt her; it will do her good. I discovered this morning that she had been shut in here with me too closely, and was needing a run in the air. It would have been nice, if we had thought of it, for Janie to have gone with her. I can't tell you, Mrs. Sloan, how glad I am that you are my neighbor,

and that my children can have yours for playfellows."

"We often say the same at our house, Mrs. Graham. There are not many children about us that mine care for, anyhow. This reminds me what I came to talk to you about. Those little Fletchers—whatever is going to be done with them—such neglected, weedy little things as Sadie and Susie are. Susie is a perfect witch, I never saw her beat; and that boy is a terror:—he is bad! Junietta sits around on the street-steps in the most lackadaisical way. Marianna has quarrelled with her teacher, and she's out of school on the street. And Bessie,—nice, noble Bessie:—I always expected she'd amount to something, but I'm worried about her—just worried. She's got to going with that Bridget McGuire, and you know the company she keeps. I saw Bessie and Henry Griffin, and Bridget and that Chet Monk, out the other evening together, talking and laughing so loud. And Robert said that the other night, after he had locked up the church, and 'twas late, they had an official meeting after prayer-meeting, and stayed until, as I told him, all decent folks were in bed. Well, as I was saying, at that time of night, he saw them all coming out of a low ice-cream saloon, in the vicinity of Dems. Bridget is just as bad as she can be, and those young men are no associates for any decent girl; and that neighborhood—you know what that means for any girl."

Mrs. Graham sat looking her neighbor in the face with consternation in every feature.

"I don't wonder you look shocked. I tell you it is too bad. Bessie is such a promising girl, if she

only had a chance. She is her mother's main stay. I think poor Mrs. Fletcher would die if Bessie should fail her."

"Bessie must not fail her!" said Hortense Graham, with a set, stern look in her face, and tears in her eyes.

"No. And I thought, seeing she is in your Sunday-school class, and that you don't get out to see what's going on these days, I must just come and tell you. Something must be done, Mrs. Graham. I don't know just what or who's going to do it, if you and I don't. You know we three are sort of related through our husbands, all being in the same company, and must sort of stand together."

"Yes: and then for Christ's sake too."

"Yes indeed! And do you know, Mrs. Fletcher is nearly losing her faith in God: not much wonder either, 's I know of. She never hears anything but profanity. Never gets to church any more: and has such trouble. They are so in debt at the groceries, and markets, that they have hard work to get anything: behind on rent, and I have been actually afraid they might go hungry."

"Mrs. Sloan!"

"It's a fact."

"But Mr. Fletcher gets large wages, and I know he is paid regularly, for Charley does that."

"Yes—and spends it all at Dem's gambling den. He does not come home lately from Saturday to Sunday night. I don't know when they've had any money. You see I seem to know a good deal about them: talk like a regular gossip, don't I? But

I've made it my business, lately, to find out. Somebody ought to keep an eye on them for good, when so many do for evil. Mr. Griffin sent my Robert to that old tenement—he owns it, you know—to make some repairs across the hall from Fletcher's, and that's the way I first found out these things. Sadie and Susie were about: they like him—all children like Sloan: and they're the queerest quizzingest little elfs—and hung about him all the time he was tinkering; bothered him awfully; and Susie at last ordered him to go and mend their back steps; and she kept up ordering, and he said she grabbed his saw once, when he laid it down, and ran off with it, and told him he shouldn't have it again unless he mended their stairs, for she fell down and hurt herself on them. He's the patientest man with children: so he didn't get cross like some would, but went and investigated, and he found them so broken that he did not venture to step on them; and the whole thing is like an old shell. He spoke to Griffin about it. Asked him if he shouldn't fix up Fletcher's part too, while he was at it. But what do you think? The old miser swore he wouldn't put a farthing on it till they paid up the rent, or got out. He said he was going to garnish Fletcher's wages pretty soon and make them leave besides. Then Rob; you know what a lovely man my Robert is: well, he just gave two good days' work and found lumber and nails, and fixed it up safe, just for Bess and the little ones. I can't help crying myself when I think of it;" and she wiped her wet face on a corner of the little apron she was making. "I just wish Rob could have fixed them some how

so that Fletcher couldn't go up them ; he ought to have mended them himself, if he was half a man."

"He isn't half a man ;" said Hortense. "I doubt if he has ever dreamed what it means to be a man."

"No, I suppose not, in the sense you mean ; but he ought to know something, of what he ought to do. Well, since that time, as I tell you, Rob and I have just been full of it. I told him at breakfast I was just going to come over and talk with you, especially about Bess. That girl hasn't clothes fit to go anywhere in. But she wears her old things with a grace that makes you almost forget they are rags. But she don't forget ; and with no prospect for anything better, what is the poor, untaught child to do ? Rob says she is out almost every evening, too late to be seen with that crowd, and—"

"Any time of day is too late, and too soon, for poor Bessie to be with them," sobbed Hortense. "Poor child ! But," and her face and voice grew stern, and her eyes dried quickly under the fire of indignation, "what more could be expected ? Just look at the surroundings ! What kind of a chance has the poor little girl had ? This is her father's work : he ought to be punished."

"Yes—just whipped !" cried Mrs. Sloan, "and I'd like to do it myself. O, don't I wish we women had the making of the laws for just a few days."

Hortense Graham had no reply to this ; she was very conservative about all "such things," but there did come a feeling that she would like, somehow, to help fix up public affairs a little, if by so doing she

could give Bessie Fletcher a reliable father. Mrs. Sloan continued :

“I’d like to vote and shut up Dem’s place, and make some kind of a law that would make those young scamps afraid to look at a girl.”

“Well, that is not our work, dear Mrs. Sloan,” said Mrs. Graham. “We must do the part that is ours, though. I tell you I think that Aunt Gracia and Annie Dayton better be notified. What they can’t do to help in this affair isn’t worth doing.”

“Now you and I won’t agree at all,” said Mrs. Sloan. “I appreciate Mrs. Weldon and sweet Annie as much as anybody can, but here is a work which they cannot do. The very thing which Miss Annie has done for the working girls, and which makes us all love her so much, has completely shut her away from Bridget McGuire, and even Bessie Fletcher. I don’t know what Maurice Fletcher would do if Aunt Gracia should be known to enter his house : he’d break something. Bridget hates Miss Dayton, makes all manner of fun of her, and her girls ; especially Fannie Mead, and poor witless Maggie Dwight. She says Maggie might get up and go to work like anybody, if she would : and any amount of such senseless stuff. And Bessie is completely under her influence, I fear ; so much, anyway, that the sight of any of the Elmwood folks would set her up to mischief. The Weldons, and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union have their work to do, but we have ours, and it looks to me that this is ours.”

“Yes ? Perhaps you are right, but I thought this

was certainly work for the Union, though I do think the church ought to do all this temperance work ; we must bring it before them. I have a peculiar personal interest in the Fletchers, as you know, but never thought I could do anything of this sort. It's a delicate thing to meddle with, for any one who does not make reform work a specialty. The only person I ever felt that I could do anything for, was Hollis Ellenwood, and that was in a social and church way. Somehow, that work came to us, Charlie and me, so we never really thought about it as a thing to be done until we were in it. He is a great joy to us. I should like to do something else that would turn out as that did."

"I should think so ! It is a change of subject—but I suppose he is going to marry Annie Dayton."

"O, as to that," and Mrs. Graham forgot to smile this time. She had discovered the facts in the case at the time of the opening of Gracia Lodge, and the more she thought it over, the more grave were her meditations. She had no words of merry jesting any more, for Hollis, certainly none for Annie ; and hardly knew how to reply to her neighbor. For lack of something better, after a moment, she remarked :

"Nobody knows about that. Annie seems removed beyond thought of marriage, and Hollis is so conscientious that he may never try to marry any woman."

"Well, I should honor him for it," said Mrs. Sloan, decidedly. "I really doubt if a man who has led such a life ever ought to marry."

"Well, for my part," and Hortense Graham

straightened herself in her chair, "I think that may be carried too far. You'll not find many young men in this day of the world, who have been free from vice all their lives."

"Of course: men are naturally worse than women; but—"

"No: excuse me for interrupting, but I do not believe it is because they are naturally more wicked or corrupt at heart; but because they have had less teaching and protection; and slipped down into loose ways all unconsciously. The standard for them has been like a false light on the shore; and they have been deceived by it. Why mothers themselves don't expect their boys to be as pure as their girls, I've found out, lately."

"I know it: I've heard it so often said that they can't be, and really it seems so."

"Seems so to you? I should like to know why. I have been so shocked and hurt to find that the mothers about me are content that their boys should do things that would blast a girl forever; but I did not expect this of you, Mrs. Sloan."

"I am not content: but I don't know how to help it. I see the facts all about me, and in my own children. Now, my Rupert. Janie never could be tolerated a day if she did the same things that we hardly notice in him. You can't deny the evidence of your senses."

"No—but we can deny the right of a boy to be unclean, vulgar, and bad, because he happens to be a boy, instead of a girl. He ought to be expected to keep himself just as clean as his sister, or sweetheart."

"Yes: that is what I think, but they don't do it; and so I say they haven't any right coming in and walking off with nice girls. I look at the fact; and make my protest. Now Hollis Ellenwood—would you allow him to marry Annie Dayton?"

"This is the way I look at it: Hollis Ellenwood was a legitimate product of the false teaching, and careless spirit of the age. All his wickedness was the result of drink. You know how completely he turned about when his eyes were opened: how absolutely he changed his whole life. This proved that he had a true heart in him. He had been better inside than outside, all his life. His habits and associations were the result of ignorance and thoughtlessness, and the mania of drink. And now, shall he, with his rich nature, his true heart, strong as man, tender as woman, be left to live solitary because of the life he fell into from sheer ignorance, and from which he has so grandly shaken himself? I don't know about such teaching as that. I don't think it is just, either to him or the woman he might make very happy, if he dared try. He ought to have been kept from all that gave him a less clean record, than, say Annie Dayton's, since you mention her; but you know we must not ignore the power of Christ to cleanse a man, and keep him clean; and even sweet Annie must have that."

"I feel all this, Mrs. Graham," said Mrs. Sloan. "And yet, suppose he should marry her, or some other lovely woman, and then, sometime, he should fall into drink again."

"O, how can you suppose such a thing!"

"Because such things do happen, dear Mrs. Graham, and you know I'm looking at things as they are, with the world as it is."

"Yes: O, I know such things, dreadful things, do happen; but not to him! Cannot! He has so truly left the old life, and given himself to the keeping of the divine Spirit, that he is not to be thought of with suspicion."

"I realize all that; I would not think of Hollis Ellenwood with suspicion. I admire, honor him, scarcely less than you. And yet, often as I see him come into church, or hear his voice in the prayer-meeting, this comes to me: what if somehow, sometime, the old appetite should assert itself, and be too much for him?"

"It's too dreadful to think of."

"I know it: I don't blame you for looking at me so: but forgive me. I tell my boys that they can't afford to take such a chance as reformation offers. Just think of a young man having this thing to fight all his life, and so many ways in which it may get the advantage of him."

"Of course: Hollis would say all that: and that is the very thing I want him and everybody to forget. It just makes me sick to have the possibility of his fall hinted at; please don't do it, dear Mrs. Sican."

"Well, I will not again; but somehow it came up naturally. I confess that he has given me hope for fallen humanity such as I never had before. I used to think that the case was hopeless when the appetite was formed. Not because God is not able to save

anybody, but something always seemed to come in to spoil it all, after a while. Just look at the men who have seemed to be converted from drink: and where are they now? Even Paul Dunwell was seen—”

“Paul Dunwell—O!”

“So Rob said yesterday; he was seen coming out of Dem’s—he gave good evidence that he was converted.”

“May be a false report.”

“May be; I said as much to Rob. He might have gone in for some good reason.”

“Well, he must stay out of all such places: Paul must. I must see Hollis, or send him word. It would be such a blow to him if any of those boys should fall.”

“Well, I tell you somebody’s got their hands full if they all stand,” said Mrs. Sloan, with emphasis. “And I’ve wondered if the blockade wouldn’t give the devil a chance to get ahead. I never noticed that he stopped for a storm.”

“I don’t believe Aunt Gracia stopped for this one,” said Mrs. Graham.

“I don’t know, I’m sure; I know I did. I haven’t been out as far as this before since Christmas night, at Annie’s house. But, Mrs. Graham, just to think of men having to be looked after, to keep them straight; it makes me angry. Speaking of marrying, I wouldn’t give my Jennie away to any man who ever touched the stuff, not if I knew it.”

Mrs. Graham remembered that she had once said to Hollis that she would give him her daughter if

she had one of right age for him ; and a strange, sharp thrill went through her as she thought : " but I am so glad my Clementine is not old enough."

" Well, I've made a stay," said Mrs. Sloan, rising. " I must go right back this minute : it is lunch time now. We must do something for Bessie."

" We must : we must indeed. Don't go. We got off this subject in some way : we must talk about it. Stay and lunch with me. I shall be alone, and we can hold a council of war. We must not let her slip out of our hands and go to ruin. Now, what can we do ? I'm ready for anything that I can do ; but I am kept at home, you know."

" Yes ; but I thought you might have her come here. The very fact that you can't get out, gives you an opportunity. Couldn't you get her to come here to do something for you ? Of course her mother needs her every minute. She's good to her mother : stays and works all day, and is so gentle with the children and her mother when she gets nervous and peevish. It's real amusing to see her good-natured, motherly way, with them all. It's in the evening, after she gets her mother and the children off to bed, that she is in danger. Of course the poor child has no pleasure ; it's all work. And then her pride is so hurt by the debts. I suppose the only comfort and relief she gets is in the company of those fast creatures. The good, happy people, who have young folks of her age, don't offer her any place among them. The church girls don't want her. She's coarse in her ways, rough in her speech, poorly dressed, and yet we know she has more real worth in

her, than some who look sweeter, and behave better."

"That's true:" said Mrs. Graham, thoughtfully. "And she would never bear patronizing."

"I should say not."

Mrs. Graham had been knitting her brows, as Mrs. Sloan talked; sighing often, in her perplexity.

"I wish," she said, "that I had thought about all this before Christmas. I could have gotten up something to keep her and the girls of my class together, and busy in the evenings. O dear, how slow I have been."

Mrs. Sloan was still standing, with her work gathered into her apron. Mrs. Graham rocking slowly, meditatively, to and fro.

"There is no time to lose;" she said, speaking again.

"Not a day."

"Something must be done."

"Or—let terrible things happen right before our eyes."

Rock, rock, rock, went Mrs. Graham's chair. Mrs. Sloan kept time with her foot, gently tapping the carpet.

The door bell rang.

Nora's step was heard along the passage—then voices.

"That's Horace," said Mrs. Graham.

She arose just as the door opened, and Mr. Date entered. He was very pale.

"Why, Horace! How you look—what? Has anything—is it Charley?"

Her hand grasped the back of her chair.

“Yes;” said Mr. Date, “he was taken sick and they’re bringing him home. Don’t be frightened, sis, or I shall wish I hadn’t come. I hated to awfully, but somebody had to. He’ll be all right. Sis, don’t! It’s just his old wound, you see. He did the foolish thing: lifted on a piece of machinery,—had no call to touch it:—thought there weren’t men ’nough ’thout him:—never thought anything could be done ’thout he did something or ’nother t’ it.”

Mrs. Graham, with Mrs. Sloan at her side, was going toward the door, her brother following, talking, in a fast, nervous, apologetical way. She went on to the gate. A carriage came driving slowly up, with the face of Hollis Ellenwood at the window. The door was thrown back. Hollis was holding the sick man in his arms. One glance at the pale face and blood stains told the story. Hortense felt herself a widow.

She did not cry out, however, but turned to Nora, who was sobbing behind her, and said:

“Go open the sofa by the fire, quick, please.” And then hastened to do it herself.

Charles Graham was lifted carefully, and brought in, and given in charge of Dr. Rust, who had been sent for by Mr. Date. Everything was forgotten now, save the relief of the sufferer, who seemed fainting unto death, as the life current trickled from his lips.

Once he opened his eyes, and looked up into the face of his wife, who knelt beside him. His lips moved.

"What is it, dear?" she asked.

"Don't—don't try to speak, my dear fellow, you know enough not to try that," said the doctor.

He nodded his head slightly, and again moved his lips, as if to frame a word. They all tried to read the mute language.

"'B-b-boys,' that is it," said Mrs. Graham.

He smiled and made the lip sign again.

"'My boys,' that's what he says," cried his wife, again, and again he smiled.

"You shall have your boys. Hollis, go quick! Telegraph! Nora will give you the address, telegraph for the boys: it is his wish."

"Is that wise?" said Mrs. Sloan. "The house must be kept quiet."

Mr. Graham again began moving his lips.

"Yes, yes, it is best—you think so, Charley, dear?" replied Mrs. Graham.

He manifested his approval in the most positive manner possible, without words.

"I understand," said Hortense. "Hollis will send the dispatch at once, and they shall come."

Hollis sent the telegram that would unite the family for a little while, and then went to the farm to bring Clementine home.

He went about these errands in a dazed way. He had received a great shock, in the stroke that smote his more than friend. What would the world full of saloons, and evil associations, and appetites, be to him, without Charles Graham! As he drove rapidly to the telegraph office, as he took his way toward the farm, over the old familiar road; all the

prayers of this man, his sympathy, tender as woman's, strong as man's nature could make it, came before him. How he had walked at his side, all his toilsome, struggling way up into a better life. What would it be to miss him everywhere? His heart was sick as he thought about it. Then suddenly, involuntarily, almost unconsciously, his whole soul reached out, and appropriated Annie Dayton.

"I must, I must!" he cried. "With this great loss coming to me, Annie, you must come also." Then again memory, like the Avenging Angel, brandished his flaming sword, which turned every way, to guard the entrance to his Eden and the tree of life. Happy Adam! Whose Eve could go with him as he went out into the desert, while he must walk alone over the earth, cursed for his sake. And the sooner he got away from the vicinity of his lost paradise the better for him. He would only wait to bury his friend out of sight, then he would go to some far away country, and make a place where he could live his life of penitence, and restitution to society, and God, and humanity, without Annie Dayton.

As the carriage drew up to the farm-house, he saw the dear face at the window, bending over some work. For an instant it was lifted, and the light of its beauty beamed upon him, in a quick, involuntary joy; but almost as soon the spontaneous radiance was quenched, in the pale after thought; and she arose and was gone. He walked on, into the void she had left behind her. Aunt Gracia met him at the door.

"Ah, my boy!" she said. "And what brings thee to give me this surprise?—Ah!—What?—Thee brings heavy tidings!"

"I come for you and Clementine—Charles Graham is dying."

"Ha! How? Dying?—No—no—whatever it is—not that—not that for him."

Annie had evidently been within hearing, for she sprang in with a cry.

"Hush, child! Why shouldst thee cry out like that?"

"Charles Graham, auntie, O, auntie!"

"Well, would thee hinder him, Annie? Who has a better right to be summoned to the King's gracious presence? I wish him joy and a good passage, and I hope that we shall not be overly selfish."

"O, Aunt Gracia—poor Hortense! Poor children!—But what has happened?" and she lifted her eyes beseechingly to Hollis.

His heart thrilled, he could scarcely keep himself at proper distance; his cold, lonely, sick heart, with this sudden storm of death beating about it, craved the comfort of her warm, womanly life, but he answered with the facts.

"I only know this: we are refitting with new machinery at the factory. He was around among it, and somehow, somebody said he lifted, or got caught in lifting when he had to exert all his strength or let the piece fall; a sudden strain, we suppose, and the old wound in his lung broke open. O, it was dreadful! We thought he would die right then, but got him home; then I left to send for the boys,

and bring Clementine. And I thought Aunt Gracia would be needed. Do you know Doctor Rust, Aunt Gracia ? ”

“ Aye, to my sorrow.—Ah ! he is their family doctor—he is there, then ? ”

“ He is.”

“ And sober ? ”

“ I doubt—in fact, no.”

“ And Hortense ? ”

“ Knows nothing but Charley.”

“ Surely : well ? ”

“ I don’t like him to be attended by that man.”

“ No. It is strange that they should keep him for their physician. He was here long before Doctor Clieves—and once we all employed him. I don’t think they have called a doctor since the last consultation about Philip, before he was sent away. Dr. Rust drinks more and more they tell me—and gives more and more of the stuff, as is perfectly natural. But Annie, bring the child—we must be going. I will have my wraps on in a minute.”

Aunt Gracia went on talking as she prepared for the ride.

“ I am not afraid of that thing thee calls death for Charles Graham, but I am afraid of a whiskey-doctor,” she said. “ I have seen things in my day that gives me reason to be afraid. Especially for one who ever made the inordinate use of tobacco that he once did. He must not be subjected to a whiskey-treatment.”

Annie had brought Clementine from the kitchen,

where she was helping Aunt Hittie make her famous doughnuts.

"You don't think my papa is very sick, do you?" she asked, looking from one to the other, getting into her fleece nervously.

"That depends what thee calls sick. I expect he is very sick, the doctor would say."

"Does—does he think he will die?" faltered the child, while all the roses of her cheeks grew white.

Hollis turned himself away from her, his eyes were filling, in spite of faith or hope.

"Thee must doubtless get ready to send papa away to the better country."

"O, I don't want him to go and leave us here! I couldn't ever get ready to send him away, Aunt Gracia. I can't let him go. What could we do without our papa? O dear Hollis, take me home quick."

Aunt Gracia led the way to the carriage. She drew Clementine to her on the seat, and tucked the robes about her, and held her close.

"Now I know what that verse meant, and what made papa look so this morning, and why I wanted to cry so." Her voice broke; and sobs surged through the sweet lips, and tears gushed over her pale cheeks. Aunt Gracia wiped the tears.

"What verse was it, dearie?"

It was some time before she answered, then brokenly she explained:

"Why, David and his son Solomon: I shall think of it always. It goes this way: 'And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded unto the Lord must be exceeding

magnifical, of praise and glory throughout all generations. I will therefore now make preparation for it: so David prepared abundantly before his—his'—
O Aunt Gracia, I can't say that," and the little frame quivered. "I can't ever say that about my papa."

CHAPTER XIII.

HORACE DATE went out to his "place" from the sick-room that night very much out of sorts. It was a bad time for the junior partner, whose share in the business was unlimited work, to be taken sick. A bad time for him to demand an hour of his time. A bad time for him to die.

With these things in his mind, chafing and galling, he went on to his "place" where he kept his wife and boy, beside other fancy stock.

The word home had never been included in his vocabulary. He was known as a hard man. Let us see for ourselves. Like his father before him, he had his own ideas of things, independent of the rest of the world. He had brought with him from the old homestead, the old family motto about the tub. He used it to a broken-down employee, to beggars of all descriptions, from the "religious beggar," who wanted money for a church; the benevolent beggar, who wanted him to help endow a hospital; to the hungry, ragged, beggarly tramp, who wanted it for a saloon lunch. Horace Date considered that they all belonged to the same class, and were to be treated to the same bit of wisdom. He used it also when his wife wanted twenty-five cents to invest in a pair of gloves or

a spring suit. His son Llewellyn knew it by heart before he was two years old, and often turned it to personal account ; being the one person who dared give it back with interest to his father.

The house was an old rambling structure, which had, with the fine lands about it, courted him ; until he retaliated by courting and marrying the only child and heiress of the old manor house. Its situation was beautiful, just beyond and in view of the city ; its outlying grounds broken into hill and glen, wooded, watered : a most lovely spot. He had married the place, and now required that it should keep the family independently of him. Mrs. Date had been bred to domestic country ways, so she kept the poultry and worked the garden, as she had always done. In her father's time, she had been furnished abundant help. Then she did the work by the sweet kindly words of her pleasant mouth ; assisting the strong muscular man-servant who waited her bidding with her own fruitful fingers when she chose. Now she worked the place with anything she could get ; sometimes it was a man, sometimes only a hoe or spade. The help of a man always depended upon the state of the egg and butter market, which was the basis of her income.

Mr. Date took only his breakfast at home, so it did not matter much whether anything grew in the fields and garden or not ; for his part, he would have preferred that it should lie in grass, for the enjoyment of some favorite cow or colt. He was a stock fancier ; finding in this his whole recreation from business. He had his pigs, of marvellous price ; always two or three fine specimens of kine, and seve-

ral blooded horses. These were to have the best of care, for which a competent man was employed. Sometimes Mrs. Date could get the man to do some work for her, while he was new : but he always found out early the estimation in which his employer held the "better half : " and acted accordingly.

Not that Horace Date had anything against his wife : in fact, he was sure he appreciated her. The only reproach he cast upon her was, that she was one of the "silly women." He often quoted Solomon to point the sarcasm of his joke, "Who can find a virtuous woman?" adding, "she would be worth more than rubies, worth almost as much as black Judy, and scarce at that."

His relations to his son were peculiar. He would have considered himself justified in being mortally offended, had not his wife given him a son. He didn't want any foolish girls around him, to spend his hard earnings in furbelows, and tie him at last to some stick of a son-in-law. It was made very clear to Mrs. Date, that she would never be forgiven if she did not make a good reliant man of his son. This was her one business, her sole mission. If she could not accomplish that, in spite of anything, she had no business to be a woman, and the wife of Horace Date. She would, in truth, be nothing better than a swindle.

His ideas of what a boy ought to be, and of a genuine man, were, however, not formulated for her guidance. He treated Llewellyn just as the impulse of the moment dictated. This was his right, which no woman should interfere with. Sometimes whole days passed

in which he did not see him by daylight; but no matter how late he was in getting home, the child must be up, and dressed, and ready to entertain him. The mother had practical, common-sense ideas, about how to train the boy; and did the best she could to please her husband, and give the child a fair chance for his life.

She coveted all that was best for the little one, and her love—starved, and defrauded of all her rights as a wife—sought that in the child which should satisfy.

For him she spent herself day and night, yearning, hoping, laboring, that something sweet and good might come at last out of him to comfort her; but her hope sickened and almost died from the first; for there was either something in the air of the place, or in the old family proverb, or latent in the young blood, that brought to the surface of the boy's life the hidden things of the father's nature, in a manner that hurt her; and alternately perplexed, angered, and amused Date, and sometimes made him dumb with surprise.

Once, when Llewellyn was about three years old, Mr. Date was kept in the house for several days by a lame foot. This was a trying time for the entire household. There was nothing at hand fit for a man like him to eat; so he said, and hence the man was dispatched to town with an elaborate order, and his wife set to work on the bill of fare; and as a result, a very nice dinner was ready to be taken to the parlor, where he sat watching operations, through the wide open doorways. His wife and boy

were both flitting about, but something in the manoeuvres of the little figure in Scotch plaid, its evident avoidance of the larger form in blue print, aroused his curiosity.

"Llewellyn, you rascal!" he called out, at length, "what in the world are you doing?"

The boy threw a hasty look over his shoulder, and darted out of sight, just as Mrs. Date came in.

"Tilda, what is that little imp up to? Go and see," he shouted.

She was coming in with the linen with which to spread the little table before him. She dropped it, and obeyed. In a moment Mr. Date heard a low exclamation of dismay and quick steps.

"What's up?" he cried.

There was no answer. His wife had gone out of the other door, and he heard her on the flagging. He put his knee on a light chair, and hobbled out; arriving on the scene just as his wife entered with his dinner in a chowder on an old tray; the boy following with his finger in his mouth, which was smeared with a mixture of the good things which he had been hastily devouring.

Mr. Date found an oath necessary, before he could even say:

"You young villain! What do you mean?"

"Have a dinner my own self;" replied the child, unconsciously using the language, in which favors asked of the father were always referred back.

Mr. Date started toward Llewellyn, but he was lame, and the little legs were nimble, and took him out into the yard, beyond reach of his father's wrath.

“ That’s a pretty mess ! ” and Horace Date looked the disgust that words could not express.

“ And the wine, Horace ! ” gasped she.

“ The wine ! What ! Has he made off with that ? ”

“ O dear ! ” was all the reply Mrs. Date could make.

“ You needn’t O dear ! I do think, Tilda, you do make the most perfect fizzles, of any woman on earth. I like perfection, you know. So if it must be a fizzle, have it complete by all means. I would like to know what you have cut that young criminal out for ? ”

Something about this affair amused Horace Date in spite of his anger, so he could afford to be facetious in his sarcasm. But to Matilda, his wife, it had no amusing features ; and as she had been a few times before, she was fired by his contemptuous tone and manner into the spirit of retort ; but she had long since learned the wisdom of silence, and so silently she went about making a rescue of the dinner from the ruins. She succeeded so well, that after a while, she brought a very comfortable repast to her husband, who had retreated to the parlor, and sat again watching operations from the door.

Llewellyn did not appear for some time. His mother kept away from him from prudential motives. But after a while he came circling in, with a delightful unconsciousness that anything had been scored against him. Swinging gayly, singing boldly, he sailed in, with the air of a tub that had learned long ago to stand on its own bottom.

"Well, sir!" said his father, "I should like you to explain yourself. What did you mean by stealing my dinner?"

"Dinner my own self," replied the boy, undaunted.

"So it seems: don't you generally have a dinner, or do you have to steal it?"

Llewellyn thrust his tongue into his cheek, and commenced whirling on his toes, swinging his arms like a windmill.

"Come here!" thundered Mr. Date, his voice having in it a mixture of anger and approval.

The child came slowly toward him, still swinging.

"Stop that whirling! Hear me! What are you growing up to be?"

"A man like you," answered the boy, with enthusiasm, springing toward him.

"You don't say so!" laughed Mr. Date. "Maybe that's so," he added, mentally. "I declare I can see myself in the young rascal; can't say I just like it either; but perhaps it's the best we can do."

This little circumstance kept a persistent grip on Mr. Date's memory; often coming to the front in a manner altogether intrusive. Whenever Mr. Date was in the house of his brother-in-law, and witnessed the unselfishness of the parents towards each other, and the manner in which the children were being trained to beautiful living, his son came up before him in sharp unpleasant contrast; and his own character as a husband and father was set in an unfavorable light. He kept all this to himself: laughed at all those things that made the Graham cottage seem, even in

his eyes, like a home ; and affected to despise all the gentle courtesies of their life : but in his soul, when chafed by the attrition of business, and vexed by the world, he often hungered keenly for just that something, in his son, that he felt sure was ripening in his sister's children, for the solace of her later years.

Llewellyn had in him many sweet and noble traits as a boy. As has been intimated, his mother's life was bound up in him. And in spite of the developments that pained her, she hoped that he might comfort her some time, for all she missed in her husband. She carried a very hungry, wasted heart, and her baby, sweet, winsome, with his large, wide open blue eyes, and soft cheeks, was all the world to her. For his sake she was willing to endure all the roughness of her lot as the wife of Horace Date. But as the boy grew, and she saw her early fears confirmed ; that he was really growing too truly to be a man like his father, as he was in his more sensual and miserly self, she realized that there was to be no rest for her ; and in her beautiful old homestead, with the pleasant fields all about her, with the shadow of the grand wooded slopes, inviting every passer-by to the most delicious coolness from the heat of life's dustle and care, she lived Madeline Fletcher's sorrowful, disappointed anguish over again. These women never saw each other, and yet they were twins in spirit and misfortune.

One day Mr. Price came to look at the fine young stock with Mr. Date, by especial invitation. The two men were neighbors in business, in lines far enough apart so that, not being rivals, they could be

friends. Mr. Price knew nothing of Mr. Date save as a prime factor in the enterprise of Clifton ; and appreciated him accordingly. He, the genial philanthropist, who was glad to give largely in his unostentatious way, out of the increase of his business, for the work of God in the world ; and whose childless home was a haven for all of humanity that floated that way, could never have comprehended the domestic relations of the Dates.

The two gentlemen stood together at the gate, looking about, when Llewellyn ran out and joined them. Mrs. Date sat near, at the window, at her sewing. She heard Mr. Price say :

"Your boy?—Ah! A nice fellow! Does not resemble you in the least: like his mother, eh?"

"Aint like she!" It was the child's voice, with contempt in every expression. "She's a 'ooman."

Mr. Date broke into a loud laugh; Mr. Price could not quite restrain a ripple, the retort had taken him so by surprise, but his laugh was suddenly sobered, and he turned a questioning face upon the father.

Mrs. Date was glad she was out of sight; but she strained her ear and clasped her hand upon her breast.

"So," said the visitor, "you are not growing up to be a woman?"

"No siree!"

"But you may have to;" laughed the voice of the father; "you look more like a girl, with your long curls, and blue eyes. What are you going to do about it?"

"Won't be like she: going to be a man like you:

see : can step big, and swear now," and he stretched out one short leg in as long a stride as possible, and a great vile oath, an echo of his father's voice and language, fell from his rosy baby mouth.

"Llewellyn Date !"

It was the first time the father had ever been really shocked at himself in miniature. He did not object to a "manly oath," properly uttered, and was not slow to avail himself of his high prerogative, but he did not like it as it came out of the lips of his boy ; and it was especially a mortification now, in the presence of Mr. Price, whom he knew as a man of clean lips, and whose respect he would not like to lose, because of the power he was able to wield in all public affairs.

"Llewellyn Date, stop such talk !" he repeated, with emphasis.

"I will swear my own self, and smoke my own self, like you," retorted the child, undaunted. "I'll do anything you do, my own self, spite of anybody ; and I won't have blue eyes, and hair curl like a girl's."

"I don't see how you'll help yourself, young America !" said Mr. Date, with an effort to laugh off his chagrin, moving away after Mr. Price, who had started on, as though in haste.

"I'll color 'em black, like yourn."

"All right ! Go back to your mother." And Mr. Date opened a gate to little Jessie's paddock, and with Mr. Price, passed through, and closed it with an emphatic bang, shutting the boy out.

"Lemme through !" he cried, grasping the slats of the gate, and shaking it with all his might.

"Go back, I tell you! you can't come, you'll have to be a girl a while yet, I tell you."

"I won't! I aint! I won't! I aint!" he cried, and in proof of the statement began to kick the gate, and swear in a manner that Mr. Price was sure he had never heard equalled.

The father paused; a look of annoyance passed over his face; then starting into a rapid walk away, he muttered:

"She'll have to settle him."

"One would think you carried a rough tongue about home, Mr. Date. I always thought you a man of good habits," remarked Mr. Price, hardly realizing that his thoughts found vent in words, until it was too late to check them.

"I don't know what the young rascal means," replied Mr. Date. "I confess I do swear myself once in a while: any man will, you know, when things get beyond all reason. But he's taxing me with compound interest to-day. I don't understand it. Fact is, his mother has no control over him at all. I think I shall have to do something desperate myself."

"Looks that way, true as you live. How he goes on! Whew! He has too lovely a face to spoil like that! And, as a Christian man, Mr. Date, I must object to your remark about any man! I do not believe it is necessary to treat even things beyond reason with profanity. It's dreadful from anybody, and from a man who dares be a father, or a little child—"

"Well," interrupted Mr. Date, in a quick, light

tone, "I'm no Christian Don't take any stock in that sort o' cant; and I do swear; don't know any man, any man, sir, who wouldn't under some circumstances: but I don't like it in a child; and I'll make it my first business to cure that youngster, and don't you forget it. Don't see what could have raised such a tempest. But there! That's the young Jersey I was telling you about. So! Boss! So! Is not she a beauty? I'd like to see the creature that could carry off the red ribband, with her around."

CHAPTER XIV.

LLEWELLYN continued his bombardment of the gate. Mrs. Date endured the noise as long as she could ; then, looking out, and seeing that the two men were off in the pasture, she took some candy from a paper and went out.

“ Wellyn,” she called, in an insinuating tone, but he only kicked, and screamed, and swore.

She went to him.

“ See what’s in my pocket for you ! ” and she exposed the end of a stick of peppermint, which was the boy’s especial delectation.

He turned, glanced at her, still screaming, for a second, but the strength of the sensual in his nature was indicated in the fact that he yielded to the seduction of his appetite, accepted the treat, greedily, and allowed himself to be led into the house, by the promise of more. He munched and crunched the stick on his way to the door : and by the time he had crossed the threshold, made a profane demand for more.

“ O, Wellyn ! ” said his mother, giving him the paper of sweets, “ don’t say such naughty words.”

“ Aint naughty : they’s big : pap said ’em : and see here now * * * you just got to make

my eyes black, and stop my hair curlin' like a girl's."

"I can't do that, child."

"Can! And now see here! You just got to do it quicker 'n Jack Robinson, or I'll—I'll—"

His threat, whatever it was, was mouthed with a lump of taffy, so that it was not intelligible.

"God made your hair curl, and your eyes blue, child, and—"

"Aint no God!"

"Llewellyn!"

"Aint! Pap said so. He's a man, and he knows. Gods aint for men: God's for 'oomen, like you—bah! Pap said so."

"Llewellyn, when did you ever hear your father say such things?" cried the mother, in amazed alarm.

"'Tother day, when I went down to the factory, a man came for money to build something for God, an' pap got real rearin', an' he said it, an' I heard him. An' Uncle Charley, he said something, and writed his name down to give some money, an' pap said, 'You're just like the silly 'oomen,' an' he is: he talks like 'em—though I like Uncle Charley, I do.'"

The pain of this in the heart of Mrs. Date, made her dumb. Her worst fears for her boy seemed confirmed. She had never professed to be a Christian, but was, in her way, a religious woman. She did not want her boy to be an atheist, and profane scoffer. She would like him to be as nearly like his Uncle Charley as possible, and had tried to teach him the things of faith. She had been often discouraged, but from this time she gave up. She said

nothing more about God. She was afraid of the great name on the lips of her child ; she was afraid of the replies he would make if she began to talk to him about anything beside the most commonplace matters. Quick, intelligent beyond his years, so like the inner man which she had discovered her husband to be, she could not bear the revelation ; she would do nothing to draw it forth if she could help it. As the boy grew, she did try to teach him to work, and help her about the place. Full of energy, active to an unusual degree, she would train his limbs, his strength to usefulness, if she could not his mind, or spirit ; and sometime, somehow, the healthful physical, might act as a rudder to the fractious intellect, and so save him from ruin. Such was her last hope. But Llewellyn had taken his cue from his father, and the hired man, and obstinately refused to bring in a kindling, or take or bring the smallest thing, at his mother's word. He wouldn't do "'ooman's work" or be "bossed by a 'ooman." Every request was met by the old retort, "do it your own self ;" often coupled with the family maxim concerning the tub, and emphasized with an oath.

She often thought she would certainly take the time, when her husband was away, and by extreme measures, compel obedience and respect. But she instinctively shrank from the result of a report from the child to the father. She had learned better than to ask assistance in establishing her authority ; so she gradually settled down into a life apart from her son, as from her husband ; doing for herself, all the ser-

vice that her dairy and poultry money would not hire ; asking nothing ; expecting nothing ; hoping nothing ; enduring all things.

At last Mr. Date awakened to the fact that his boy was not likely to amount to much, unless something was done ; and concluded to take him in hand. He must, of course, some time look after affairs. A great deal of money was being gathered together ; large business interests continually increasing, would by-and-by come into his hands ; and as a matter of education, he must begin to do something ; so he began to train him.

The scenes which ensued were too disgraceful to recount ; scenes in which the father learned how truly his boy had been growing after the plan traced on the fibre of his being, at his birth.

Many real anxious days came, in which Mrs. Date had much to endure from the upbraidings of her husband. But at length there resulted a change of tactics which promised well.

Llewellyn was passionately fond of a fine horse, and, as he grew, spent a great deal of time out among the stock, in company with the man, and often alone. One morning he found a fine colt in the care of a beautiful thoroughbred, in her private paddock. He stood in profound admiration of the mother and her promising daughter, as his father came, unobserved, upon the scene. Mr. Date was surprised at the noble, tender look in the face of his boy. He did not suppose it capable of any such language. The lines of cunning and selfishness, which had begun to make it unpleasant to behold,

were gone, and instead was a genuine boyish interest in the dumb language in which the mother was expressing her proud delight in her offspring.

"O, Judy! Aint you proud!" he cried, a real quaver in his voice. His hands reached out to caress her, his whole face was tremulous with the pathos of his sympathy for the animal mother.

Judy would not permit Llewellyn to quite touch her foal, although evidently enjoying his admiration, and the petting and caresses which he lavished upon her.

"You're mighty careful of your young 'un, aint you, now?" he said, again essaying to get around the dam, to the colt. "Do you think she's too good to touch? Well, I don't blame you! She's a beauty, so she is,—just like you for all the world, and I tell you, Judy, what 'tis, I'm going to have her for my own self, I am—and train her—and teach her tricks, and—"

"You are, are you?"

Llewellyn wheeled at the sound of his father's voice, and his face changed instantly, but still retained something of the boyish winsomeness, which Horace Date was glad in his soul that he had seen.

"Yes, I am;" he answered. "I found her first, and she's mine—aint she a beauty?"

Mr. Date stood looking at his son, and at the colt a moment. Many thoughts went through his brain. At length, he said:

"Llewellyn, you know you can't have her unless I say so—"

Llewellyn interrupted with the first oath he had

used since he found Judy and her baby, and his face grew ugly.

"Stop that talk! and hear me;" said Mr. Date. "It's so: Judy was bought with my money, a big pile, too; and she and her colt belong to me; so does everything here. You will get it after me, provided you don't get to cutting up so t' I have to disinherit you. It'll be worth your while to behave and listen. Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. If you really want Judy's colt to bring up for your own, and train, I'll let you earn her, and have her. If you earn her, she is yours, and nobody can dispute your right to her."

"How earn her?"

"You begin and do the chores morning and night about the place; take good care of Judy and the colt, do it without being told from anybody."

"I'll do it 'thout being told, 'f 'tall."

"Well, well, that's all right! Do it all up good, and you shall have her for your own, with nobody to interfere."

"Honor bright?" cried Llewellen.

"Honor bright? Yes!"

"Well, sir, I'll do it, see 'f I don't."

"All right, we will see."

"You will see. I'll hold you to your bargain."

"And I you to yours: go ahead and do your part, and I'll do mine. You can take possession at once, but when you don't do your work you forfeit all claim to her."

"All right: Lady March, d'ye hear that? You are mine: I've earned you: and you are mine."

"Ah! You're rather fast, young man! You haven't earned her yet."

"Yes I have: 'cause I'm going to do the things, 'pon honor."

So the bargain was made; and Llewellyn Date had at last an object in life, besides simply to avoid being like his mother.

He entered upon his work like one who had been trained to the regular routine of choreing about. His mother, dumb before from despair, was now silent with amazement. And as days passed, and the boy went steadily on in his thoughtful, careful performance of his part, she seemed like one awaking from some bitter dream.

Mr. Date was surprised at the fidelity with which Llewellyn kept his part of the contract, and became deeply interested to see how he would hold out. He even detained Mr. Price one day to relate to him, as one who had a right to know, these incidents, which certainly indicated an improvement. He made it the occasion to impress upon his business friend, the success which had attended his efforts to reform the young scapegrace, whom his mother had so nearly spoiled.

Llewellyn experienced a real interest in the work. And, in watching the developing graces of the little Lady March, as he called her in honor of her natal month, became more contented, was less boorish to his mother, even inviting her to a share in the pleasure he had in the young creature. And in admiration of her, and in talking about plans for bringing her to her best, they found a common

ground of interest, and seemed drawn nearer together than ever before.

Between Llewellyn and Lady March there was the most perfect understanding. He never uttered an oath or a harsh tone in her presence ; and she knew no reason why her entire love should not be given her young master. To her he was everything that was kind and lovely in boyish nature ; and she manifested her regard for him at every opportunity. She was wonderfully intelligent, and learned to do the most surprising things at a word from her young master or at the motion of his hand. Llewellyn even condescended to thank his mother, when from her egg money she bought him a Horse Trainer's Guide and Manual, and the hours were silver shod that galloped by and left him still poring over it until he had it by heart. Then with the book and lumps of sugar in his pocket—at a certain place at the pasture fence he would order the movements of the dainty beauty according to the ritual he had learned. His mother was often an interested spectator and grew almost happy in the genial light which his face turned towards her, as she lavished applause and praise. Mr. Date often brought men from town to look on and admire, as Llewellyn, calling her by a whistle, with graceful gestures led the spirited movements of Lady March. He had, at last, something at his "place" to give it the flavor of a home, and with his wife, was more genuinely happy during these days, than at any other period of his life.

As for Llewellyn, he was proud and happy as a king, and seemed to be losing much of the old self

in the new, busy life. During the season when the colt could run the field, the first thing in the morning, the first on his return from school at night, was a visit to the trysting-place at the pasture fence. Very early Lady March learned to be in waiting when he came, and to begin the search in his pockets for dainty morsels, hidden for her to find.

Mrs. Date longed to hear her boy say "thank you," again; so, by careful hoarding, she saved money enough from the sale of an unusually large brood of turkeys, to provide him with a handsome saddle. She embroidered the blanket with artistic taste, and had the peculiar gladness of being allowed to kiss his cheek, as he stood dumb with surprise at the gift. Never had she been so happy since the days of courtship, as when she saw him, beaming with delight, buckle the silken girth about the round barrel of his pet's body, mount, and ride away toward the city. Whatever happened to give her pain and arouse the old misgivings, Mrs. Date was, during this time, comforted for all the days in which she had known that hopeless despair.

Hortense Graham and her husband had mourned over this nephew; but at last began to hope that better things were developing in him, and the entire neighborhood felt that they were warranted in removing somewhat the restrictions which had shut him out, as the worst boy in town, from the society of their children.

It was just the day before Philip and Benny started for Vermont, that Llewellyn with his new saddle came swooping down upon the children as they were

at play all together with the young Sloans. He came to say good-by, and also to show off Lady March and her new mounting. Llewellyn was perfectly at home in the saddle—and his movements as he careered up and down before the group, with the beautiful two-year old under him, were very graceful—and at last Benny, rendered bold by eagerness of desire, cried out—

“O Llewellyn! let me ride just a minute!”

For answer Llewellyn tossed his head and turning, cantered gracefully away.

“I should think he might take turns, and let us all ride, once in a while,” said Benny, in an indignant tone.

“He’ll never do it,” said Philip; “he wants to ride his own self.”

All the children laughed at the tone and words uttered in perfect mimicry of Llewellyn’s own.

“He’s a selfish fellow,” said Rupert.

“Well,” said Malcolm, “maybe some of us wouldn’t be any better if we had such a—”

He stopped short suddenly, remembering that Clementine was own niece to Mr. Date, and she stood at his side.

“We know what you were going to say,” said Philip. “Needn’t stop for relation’s sake.”

“Aint he awful at school, though,” said Rupert.

“I wish cousin Wen was a good boy,” said gentle Clement.

“He’d be real handsome if he was,” said Jamie Sloan.

“But,” continued Clement, “as Malcolm said,

"'taint all his fault—my mamma said so. I do think it's too bad he couldn't have had a papa like ours."

"Uncle Horace swears, I heard him," said Benny. "I s'pose a papa that swears can't have a very good boy."

* * * *

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, Mr. Date went home to his wife and boy, unusually vexed that night. Too much vexed even to tell Matilda what had happened. As did not often happen, he had gone home without his supper. He was not expected—and consequently did not find a very elaborate menu from which to select. This aggravated him as he sat and warmed by the dining-room fire, and looked at the table. Llewellyn had been called to supper, and came in high spirits. He had had a tussle with the snow in his efforts to reach the stable through a new drift, and had heartily enjoyed an hour with Lady March, now almost three years old. Llewellyn was fifteen.

The father watched the young fellow getting off his boots, shaking out the snow, and putting on housewear, for a moment, and then abruptly asked :

"I should like to know what you propose to do for yourself, Llewellyn? It's about time you were getting ready to do something, to partly pay for your keeping."

The boy paused in the act of drawing on his slipper, with his foot up against his thigh, and his head bent down, and waited, as if listening, for a full second after his father had come to a full stop. Then straightening himself, and setting his foot

down, he threw a defiant look at his father, and said :

“ I guess I can take care of myself, if that’s what you mean. I didn’t ask to come here, in the first place, I’d have you know. And I’m ready to get out any time.”

“ You didn’t, eh ? You are, are you ? ” and Mr. Date laughed, as he always did at Llewellyn’s outbursts. “ Well, you are here, and it costs something to keep you, as you’d find, if you had it all to earn. If you went away, you’d be mighty glad to get back to your crib. You and your horse make quite an item on the books, I tell you, and it strikes me you’d better be doing something. What are you going to do with Lady March, is another thing to settle. I’ve had some good offers for her, and—”

“ Offers for her ? ” and the boy stared in amazement at his father.

“ Why, yes : you seem surprised ; don’t you think she’s worth an offer ? She’ll bring a good price.”

“ She’s worth her weight in gold ! ” cried Llewellyn. “ But she’ll never have a price put on her, I tell you that. I’d as soon think of selling her,” and he threw his hand out toward his mother.

Mr. Date laughed again : but neither Llewellyn nor his mother saw anything to laugh at. He was fired with a strange indignation against his father. Lady March was to the boy all there was in life. All the sensibilities which had ever been aroused in his soul, were stung to the quick by the words ; and the laugh enraged him. Tears were in his mother’s eyes ; her

face had grown very pale, and this added to his fury. He clinched his fist, and cried out :

“ I tell you what it is, old man: you ever let anybody set a price on her, and I’ll either run away with her—or—or I’ll shoot her. Yes, I will! I’ll shoot her and the man who asks what she’s worth.”

“ There! That will do, sir! You talk like the fool your mother made you;” said Horace Date, leaning forward in his chair, as if to arise.

“ Fool or not, you’ll find it true.”

Mr. Date had been amused as well as vexed, but now he was thoroughly angry. And Mrs. Date was alarmed. She had reason to be, for there followed a scene which resulted in open war between this father and son, and brought the end of peace to the home, and the death of hope to the patient mother.

CHAPTER XV.

THE little Graham boys were hastened home, and brought to their father. Benny, flushed with vigor gathered from the Green Mountain slopes, his blue eyes wide, showing a gleam of the brave, true nature within. A fairer lad had rarely blest any home. Nora had always said, since his cheeks first began to harden and bloom, that he was "sweet enough to eat."

Philip had acquired somewhat of strength, but was still pale and delicate of frame, and in the dark eyes, veiled with the long curling lashes, there was a shadow and telltale lines upon the beautiful face; and even as he lay upon his father's breast in the close clasp of affection, the chill of that strange distrustful spirit, that had presided at his birth, surrounded him, and kept him to himself alone with discontent, aloof from sympathetic influences.

Charles Graham devoured the faces of his boys with hungry eyes, and for the first time since he was stricken down, felt that he must make a fight for length of days. He had thought that to him had come the night when no man can work. The active world was to his vision like a far-away peak, veiled with eternal misty blue; he had left it far behind,

but now, as he held his first born, and remembered from whence came that shadow that darkened his eyes with mistrust, and what iron was writing such lines on the soft tablet of his face, his soul cried out for time instead of eternity, for space and opportunity to undo the work of the thoughtless past; and from this hour he began an eager struggle for a new foothold in this world.

To Aunt Gracia he said, in the faint whisper which was alone possible, after the boys had gone out,

"I am not ready to go hence and leave Philip. The rest will get along—but Philip needs me. I thought I was ready, but O for days—for time; the sin of my youth will make my bed uneasy in which to look my last of him—my boy, my boy!"

To God he cried all through the long dark hours.

"Let me live for Philip's sake—you know why, O my God—no one can know him as I do—no one can bring him up as I can. Add to me strength and length of days. I do not deserve it—I steeped my whole body in the poison of that filthy weed, defiled the Temple of God, and dared the blasphemy of evoking this life for my own pleasure, that I might behold my image in flesh, O my success! how worse than failure my boy is like to grow into what I would have been had Thou not cleansed me. His foundations are in the lusts of the flesh, and the sight of the eye, and the pride of life. He is a temple builded of defiled timber. The plague spot was in the timber. My own unbelieving selfishness was quarried for his walls. I cannot bear the sight—O, let me live to undo—to rebuild—to regenerate and

transform him. The peculiar beauty of his face, with those lines of passion on it, mock all my hope and embitter my anticipations of heaven. Let me live to rewrite, to over-write it, to tell him—to go with him down into his secret soul and wrench this evil spirit from the throne he has usurped, and bring Christ in. Why did we let him go away—months worse than lost, if I must go away.”

Thus through the hours—the days and nights he prayed and worried heaven. Strangely his faith seemed dimmed. Strangely his face was drawn with fret and careful pain.

These anxieties kept him fast even after there seemed reason that he should recover.

Dr. Rust was assiduous in his attendance. He was a believer in heroic treatment, and Charles Graham received the full benefit of the old doctor's faith and practice. The medicine bottles and boxes accumulated, and the atmosphere of the closet just off the sick room, where at length a table was given to the doctor's use, began to suggest such places as “Dem's” and “The Lamb's Fold.”

Days passed into weeks, and still Charles Graham lingered on the verge of life. The old routine went round in the factory. Horace Date was getting along without him, and the busy world was closing over the place where he had dropped from its activities.

A quiet place was kept about the sick man by dint of effort. The boys ran out and in of their father's room, and after the first impression of awe had passed, made the outer air vocal as they reproduced the pastimes of their country life.

Clementine alternately romped with her brothers and the Sloan children, and hovered about the sick bed. Mrs. Graham carried in her face the marks of the blow that had stricken her husband, but went in new and almost supernatural strength about her ministry. Day and night she hung over her husband's couch, administered all the remedies with her own hand, yielding her place only occasionally to Hollis, or Annie, or Aunt Gracia, or Uncle Benjamin, while she essayed to rest.

The sudden cutting down of this active, genial man had been felt in many places beside his home and the office in which stood his vacant desk. Many were the anxious inquiries—but probably upon none had the shock produced a profounder impression, than upon Maurice Fletcher, engineer.

Thoughts and feelings such as he had not often experienced, kept him company ever since he had heard how his old friend had fallen at last from the old wound never to arise again.

Maurice Fletcher was a worse man than even Charles Graham knew him to be; yet there was a place in his heart that could be touched, which Graham had found long ago. And the feeling which he had for his old comrade, proved that he was not altogether dead to manly sentiment. He thought of him constantly; although he made but few inquiries, and those in an off-hand, indifferent way; but John Mark noticed that he was absorbed and troubled.

One day Hollis Ellenwood was the bearer of a message to Fletcher, that Mr. Graham had asked to

see him. No one would have guessed how the heart of the man leaped. He turned quickly away, afraid and ashamed to reveal his glad surprise. He did not go for his usual drink that evening, until he had been home and changed his clothes. He had thought he would not touch a drop, but there was a strange feeling about his heart, as he walked slowly toward the cottage, which called for something.

"I must brace up a little," he said to himself, "or I shall make a fool of myself." So he went into the nearest saloon to get a dram, just to give him courage; but at the very door thought better of it, turned back and made his way to the place. He was met at the door by Mrs. Graham, and shown into the sick room.

He paused on the threshold, shocked at the change in the face before him. Could that be he? Those sunken cheeks, with the palor of death over them; the eyes, supernaturally large, fixed upon him with a gaze as from eternity, was that Charles Graham?

"Come in:—I am—glad to see—you, my friend."

The voice was hollow, broken by gasps; unlike anything he had ever heard. He was repelled. A cowardly dread took possession of him, and for a moment he was chained to the threshold.

A long, thin hand was lifted feebly, and beckoned to him. He stepped in; and with careful, hesitating, awkward feet, approached, and took the extended hand. It was clammy and chill, a shiver went through him, and his neck band seemed suddenly to grow tight. Mrs. Graham gave him a chair at the bed-

side, and he dropped into it without power to speak.

"I had—just—a—little word to say,—I can't talk much,—Maurice."

"O don't! Don't talk."

"But I must: and you must—never forget what I say. You did me a—great service once."

"Never mind 'bout that," gasped Fletcher.

"I do: I never forget it; we, wife 'n I:—a great service: and now, I want to serve you; I would with my life, Maurice. It's 'bout your wife, and children—we are—" he paused, panting. Fletcher dropped his hands between his knees, and his chin on his breast. Mrs. Graham fanned her husband, as he lay catching his breath.

"Are you able, dear?" she said.

He answered with his eyes, and after a moment he began again, cutting his words short, choosing carefully.

"Maurice: we're 'sponsible to God, and them,—our wives and children: you 'n I: we took the girls out of homes: O! the children: God will judge us."

The breath failed. He struggled with short quick gasps. His lips compressed in the effort to check a rising cough. Maurice Fletcher sat with cold waves going up and down his spine. After a moment, the large brilliant eyes turned upon him with such entreaty, and the weak voice whispered,

"I can't:—my friend. O, I wanted—to say so much—don't drink—sign—God help—you—Amen."

He closed his eyes and lay exhausted—and spake no more.

Mrs. Graham laid her hand on his forehead. He

looked up at her, then at Fletcher, who had arisen, and stood twirling his hat.

"I think I understand, Charley, dear," she said. "Don't try to speak again."

The injunction was unnecessary, for a painful fit of coughing made it impossible. Mrs. Graham stepped quickly to the medicine closet and opened the door. At once, with something that made you think of an excited animal, Maurice Fletcher lifted his head and sniffed. Mrs. Graham selected a bottle and spoon, and came out, saying to her husband :

"I don't like to give you this again so soon, but your exertion makes it necessary." Then to Mr. Fletcher, who had arisen, and stood alert, with a curious, sinister look in his face : "It will not do for him to cough," she said.

She unstopped the bottle and poured out the mixture. Fletcher threw his head forward, and seemed with nose and lips to be quizzing the spoon as it was on its way to the invalid. His lips grew moist and sensual to a degree, his throat worked, as drop by drop the odorous liquor was poured on the tongue of the sick man. He said nothing. He was all unconscious of the expression upon his face and even fingers, but a very tempest of thought and feeling surged him. He felt that an act of sacrilege had been performed. Yet, why? Of course it was the thing to do, anybody, a fanatic would say that; but that this odor, with its peculiar effect upon him, should fill this place, was not in harmony with the thoughts which he had brought with him and the feelings with which he had tried to catch the broken

words of Charles Graham. He might just as well have taken his drink—he would go and get it.

The potion taken, and the cough momentarily checked, still holding the open bottle from which the breath of the serpent was breathing forth into the face of Maurice Fletcher, Mrs. Graham said to her husband:

“You see, dear, you cannot talk.”

The sick man shook his head slowly, while his eyes were fixed pleadingly upon Maurice.

“You would like me to tell him?”

“Yes.”

“Mr. Fletcher,” she said, turning, and looking him in the face, “Mr. Graham and I have often talked together about you and your family. You know how truly we have both appreciated your kind services. Ever since that first letter from the hospital, I have felt—O—it was done to me: you know that caring for my husband was all done to me, even more than to him. Can I ever forget it? Or cease to reverence the man who did it? All these happy years since, I owe to you, under God.”

Fletcher trembled violently and great drops oozed out on his face. For an instant he forgot the bottle.

“And yet, must I tell you? We have felt that you were not dealing as generously by yourself, and—and your family, as you did by us. We have had to pray for you very hard: we have wanted you to be good. Your poor wife: your boy: your Bessie going to ruin! O! These are what we wanted to talk to you about. That’s it, isn’t it, Charley?”

“Yes, yes.”

"I think you understand it all, Mr. Fletcher: this is why he tried so hard to talk to you, and said don't drink. Sign. He wants you to sign the pledge and be good—you understand?"

He understood: and yet, what of the bottle in her hand? He saw it again, smelled it, craved it. It was only medicine, of course; and yet—he lingered a second, while the wide, beseeching eyes of his friend held him, then turned and went stealthily out. Strangely conflicting feelings crowded upon him. Should he go up the street, home, or down to Dem's? He remembered the drink he did not take, and the bottle in the sick room, and went down.

Charles Graham had not been hopeful in his struggle for life. Something essential to success seemed lacking, and this effort discouraged him. He felt that his days were few. He tried to tell his wife of his anxiety about Philip, but he was so harassed by the cough, or by fever, or heavy with stupor from the drugs, tortured by cravings that food would not satisfy or medicine relieve, that he could not. And as the fiery stuff he was taking worked on in his weakened frame, he became too self-conscious, too weak mentally, to even remember Philip's needs. There were no needs but his own; no one had any right to time and attention but he. He became fretfully exacting, demanding the care of a child.

"You're getting to be a regular cry baby," said Doctor Rust, in his peculiar way, one day. "We'll have to put you in long clothes."

Charles Graham smiled faintly, but assented that

these were the facts in the case ; while Aunt Gracia stood wonderingly by.

“ Charles Graham, even at the limit of strength and life, should be more of a man than this ; ” she thought.

“ I have made a change in the medicine,” said Doctor Rust, going into the closet.

“ What is it, doctor ? What is this thee is giving him ? ” asked Aunt Gracia.

“ Just a simple tonic, madam,” was the curt reply.

When the doctor had given his instructions and gone, Aunt Gracia arose, and taking the bottle, went out to Hortense, who was resting in her room, and said :

“ Is thee satisfied, Hortense, with thy doctor and his bottles ? I tell thee plainly, although I have refrained till now : I am not. What is this potion, thinks thee ? I have been suspicious, but since thee attended to all the medicine, I have not examined it. I think I have been a coward : but now for love of thee and him I am going to interfere. This—this is strong with alcohol ; poor whiskey or brandy is the basis of all the medicines our Charley is taking. John Mark said last n’ight, that he heard it said that Charles Graham was being kept alive on stimulants : reported by the doctor himself : I suspected it would be so from the first, for Doctor Rust is just such a man as that, and—”

“ But Aunt Gracia, he must be kept alive on something, and—”

“ Hortense, this stuff will not keep him alive ; it will only make it impossible for God to lift him up ;

and then, beside, suppose he should get up leaning on this poisoned stuff, it would be only to fall and be made ashamed at last."

"What do you mean?"

"Mean? I mean that alcohol has no respect for any man. It will serve Charles Graham just as it did—as it did John Mark, if it can get a chance."

"Charley? My good Christian Charley! A man consecrated to God like him? O, Aunt Gracia! I never heard you say anything before that came near making me angry. Don't intimate such a thing!"

"Consecrated flesh, pickled in alcohol, is just like any other, Hortense. I love you and that boy with the love of a mother; you must not be angry: I know it is not a light thing to interfere in a case like this, where an old family doctor is in charge, but you have not had occasion to call him since the light has shined upon this medicine chest question, and now I know you are not in condition to repudiate anything that promises relief. The first thing to you is the life of your husband: and we should all hold him as long as we can; but, dear, don't forget that Christ is the physician, after all, and any remedy that He would not prescribe, if He were here in the flesh, will be poison to kill, instead of a balm to heal."

Aunt Gracia replaced the cork in the bottle, and turned toward the bed-room where Charles was lying in a deep stupor. She paused at the door and stood with her eyes fixed upon his face, and her hand clasping that of Hortense, who had arisen to a sitting posture.

"Of course," she said, "I cannot say more. I cannot take this matter out of thy hand, but be advised, dear child. If he must leave this world for the King's palace, let him go with his brain free from the mist of opium or alcohol. If the Lord will that he arise, and come out among us again, let it be with God-given strength, not that borrowed from this, the devil's vile imitation of the Holy Spirit."

Hortense made no reply. Doctor Rust had always been their physician. He had great reputation. Her husband's life was at stake. Dare she touch the matter? Dr. Rust would not brook interference by the least suggestion. The case must be absolutely in his hand: obedience must be unquestioning; a word would therefore send him away, and then the whole responsibility would be upon her. She, however, did not like to have it settled that her husband was living on alcoholized remedies. She had surmised it, and feared some one might discover the same ground for suspicion, and make it take the importance of fact. This was one reason why she had so sedulously guarded the medicine bottle. She almost resented that Aunt Gracia had uncovered the secret; for now, if she gave the stuff, it must be with her eyes wide open; and in defiance of the later convictions which had come from knowledge. She must do what she would condemn any other woman for doing. But to jeopardize the life of her husband was more than she could be expected to do. She was just about to speak, when Aunt Gracia said:

"If he were fully himself, and knew all about it, would he think it was right?"

"O, I don't know. I am hard pressed: I am forsaken: I am very unhappy."

"My child, my child, this is the language of rebellion, of unbelief. Where is thy faith?"

"I don't know: I know all you would say, Aunt Gracia, of course, but my heart is numb, dying as he is. I dare not interfere with Doctor Rust: he is a great physician: if he cannot cure my darling, no one can. And to think for a moment that the little alcohol in these medicines will make a—a—do him any harm, is simply foolish: the idea! If that is all you are afraid of, Aunt Gracia, we needn't be troubled. I'm sorry to disagree with you;" and she threw her arms about Aunt Gracia's neck: "I am not so rich in friends that I can afford to even grieve you for a moment; but in a matter like this, I must be careful. I should expect it would kill him to make any change now."

Aunt Gracia drew Hortense closely to her, kissed her tenderly, while her eyes grew heavy with tears: and without a word turned in to the room where the sick man lay. She felt that she had still one resource: the old tried refuge of prayer, but her heart was very heavy.

The days passed: Dr. Rust still went in and out. Hollis Ellenwood, postponing his departure, spent all the time he could get from the factory in attendance upon his friend.

Annie Dayton and Aunt Gracia spent alternate days, and Uncle Benjamin's were the strong arms that lifted the wasting frame as a mother might lift a child. John Mark shared in the night work, but it

was left by common consent to Hortense to administer all medicine. Horace Date came but seldom, and then never stayed but a few moments. He said he "had no knack for sickness."

The old family carriage, with father or mother Date, stopped at the gate often enough to give the world no cause for gossip; leaving flowers or fruit, but always thinking best not to intrude by more than an inquiry—would wait until the invalid was able to ride; then it would be at his service.

Thus Hortense and her family, in this day of their trial, were left to the few friends who loved and valued her and hers for Christ's sake: and yet these, the last and only resort, were helpless before the power of the serpent that had coiled its slimy folds upon the very altar of their home: for it was true that Charles Graham was being kept under the influence of the very same demoniac poison, against which he had arrayed all his power as a Christian man. And that, unknown to any but the pitying One who knows all our frames, and how the woof of habit is woven into the warp of our nature, the subtle destroyer had found a place ready and waiting for him, in the swept and garnished chamber, where the unclean tobacco fiend had once held his revel, and left his trail behind him. Our friends had yet to learn the terrible fact that nicotine calls for alcohol as truly as salt for water. And that the tobacco habit in one generation, prepares the way for alcoholism in the next.

Betwixt fear and love, the conscience and heart of Hortense Graham were ground, as wheat between

the stones of a mill ; as she continued to receive the doctor's orders, and administer the increasing portions of medicine, with its mischievous accompaniment.

The doctor assured her that her husband was doing finely ; and such was her blind confidence in him, her rash faith, that she believed, and was glad ; and was ready at length to take an undisguised bottle of " the best proof brandy," and preparing it with water and sugar, as directed, bring it to her husband and see him take it without a pang of fear.

We have not space to record the talks at the farm : the indignant protests that were framed, but never presented. For after what had passed, they all felt it would be more than useless to say anything further at present. So they simply waited, hoped and prayed ; each, however, agreeing that upon no account would they become partners in this sacrilege, by giving the stuff : that Hortense must do it herself, or it would go without being done.

" I honestly believe he would be better without anything in the shape of medicine," said Aunt Gracia.

" I wish I had the chance to nurse him one twenty-four hours," said Mehitabel. " He would have one good chance to get sober."

" O, Aunt Hittie ! how dreadful that sounds," said Annie.

" Well, if he is ever sober like a Christian again, he's got to get so, if what you all say is true," she retorted. " And no good ever comes o' trying to fix up dreadful things, and make 'em look scrum.

And—I am surprised at you, Gracia: I would not have believed that you could ever have been kept still under such circumstances.”

“I am surprised at myself, Mehitabel. I don’t know why I can do nothing; the only thing I can do yet, is to keep Hollis and John Mark away from those bottles, and burn with indignation, that we, as Christians, are so helpless against one doctor. But, of course, Hortense Graham is mistress in her own house, and stands between Charles and all the world. Everything that reaches him must go through her hands, or by her consent.”

“It’s an awful thing, I think, then, to be any man’s wife,” said Mehitabel. “I’m glad the good Lord didn’t lay that on me; for a woman’s sure to lose all the sense she ever did have, when the man is in danger. I am disappointed in Hortense, I declare I am. I’ll believe any foolish thing of any woman after this. I shouldn’t wonder if Gracia’d be going around with a brandy flask, if Benjamin should be sick, and Doctor Cleives should order it. All seems to depend on how much confidence a woman has in her doctor, that’s all.”

“I do not blame thee, Mehitabel. I am astonished at Hortense; but there is much to excuse her; and we should any of us be left to strange foolishness, if we do not let the wisdom of God keep us. I am in sore distress about them, in spite of my faith in God. I shall keep as close to them as I can, and be ready to help them when the time comes. But we must all remember that Hortense has not had the advantage of learning about these things. She has been

so occupied with her own church work, and her home, she has never come into range of the knowledge that would save her now. Charles knows: he has attended the Gospel meetings, and heard much that will come to his rescue as soon as he can get possession of his faculties."

"Why don't somebody then give him the chance? I've a good mind to take matters into my own hands for a few days," said Mehitabel.

They all looked at her in astonishment. She, the kitchen hermit; who never attended a Gospel meeting, or a session of the W. C. T. U., to think of Aunt Hittie outside of her chosen sphere, in the aspect of a reformer of this aggressive type, provoked a laugh in spite of the solemnity of the occasion.

"I believe you'd do something, Aunt Hittie, if you should try," said Annie.

"Or break something," suggested Uncle Benjamin, dryly.

"Something 'll have to break, I'm thinking. I'd break that bottle, you may be sure. I know something about sick folks, I guess: and if I don't belong to the W. C. T. U., I know enough not to let brandy and stuff be poured down anybody's throat by any doctor."

Aunt Hittie's opportunity was at hand.

In the midst of the watching and waiting, Hortense Graham received a peremptory summons to the seclusion of her own room, where the little expected guest demanded her undivided attention, and the care of her husband was left entirely to others.

When this became known to Mehitabel, she wiped

her hands on the kitchen towel, and untying her apron, said :

“ Now, Benjamin, I’m going to take a vacation. You can get along without me for a day or two. There’s lots o’ things cooked up, and Fannie Mead can come over and tidy things. I’m going to Graham’s.”

“ You are ? ” asked her brother, in consternation ; for such a departure as this had never been known before, and no one could predict what would come of it.

“ Yes, sir, I am. The idea of that man being kept in that condition ! I’ll go and break the spell for once, and give him a chance ; then I’ll come home.”

“ Gracia will stay and—”

“ Gracia can’t be in more than six places at once. She’ll have her regular work, and have to look after Hortense, and they’ll be getting some nurse who’ll be just the tool of that doctor. I’m going to go and just attend to him, and nobody else ; and I’m not afraid of the doctor or of the consequences. And I’ll compromise nobody. I’ll take it all on my own shoulders. I want you to hitch up and take me down : I’ll be ready in just five minutes.”

And she was.

Uncle Benjamin had a grim satisfaction in the fact that Aunt Hittie had the courage to undertake to come between Charles Graham and his physician ; but the result was so uncertain that he could not be sanguine. He ventured a word of caution as they were on their way in the cutter, but she anticipated him, breaking in upon his first effort, with :

“Now Benjamin, I know by your tone just what you’re going to say, and you mustn’t say it. I’m only just going to put in practice what we all believe, and what you and Gracia teach: which is to do right, no matter what it costs, and leave consequences to God. I wonder that that Doctor Rust has been allowed here, in this Christian town, to go around in this way. Why he’s worse’n a saloon—a saloon on foot—and with the right o’ way into the very sanctuary. I don’t know but I shall have to resign my dish cloth and apron in your kitchen, and follow this fellow around. I never had a call to anything before, but I’ve got one now. Why it’s scandalous! Hortense could be persuaded, and if she is such a fool that she can’t be, why then she must be taken care of: but she’s out of the way now, thank the Lord! It’s a good thing that baby came just now, if he couldn’t ha’ come before and taken her out o’ the way. The idea! But I think a good many good folks get in the way sometimes, and do no end of harm.”

“That’s all true, Hittie; and if the Lord has called you, as you say, you must go and do His bidding. What do you propose to do down there? if you don’t mind telling.”

“Do?—it’s what I wont do that’ll do the business. I wont give him that stuff, or let anybody else.”

“Well, but what if some one, Nora, for instance, insists on giving him his medicine; you’ll get into a quarrel—”

“Benjamin Weldon! don’t you know me better than that? I shall offer myself to take entire control of the sick room, in this crisis of affairs there. There’ll

be enough for Nora to do, so she'll not bother me; there'll be nobody to know—"

"But the doctor, he—"

"O the doctor! I'll not have any fuss with him. I'll take all he brings in, listen to all he says, and then do what's right, and leave undone what's wrong. Charles Graham don't need any doctor's stuff. I've got everything he needs right here in this basket—"

"What's that?"

"Just nourishment, and such; nothing to hurt a baby. You'll see that he'll come out o' this and begin to chirk up before I get done with him. And he'll know Doctor Rust better too, or I'll miss my guess."

In due time Aunt Hittie appeared before Aunt Gracia, in the Graham cottage.

"Why, bless thee, Mehitabel! then thee did mean what thee said?" she exclaimed, as she saw her bag and basket.

"Mean it? of course I did; and now you can tell Hortense that Aunt Hittie is here to take sole charge of Charles, and she may rest easy. There'll be enough for everybody else to do, and I don't want any of Doctor Rust's professionals coming in here to take care of him."

"No: he would have had one before now if we would have listened to it. I am glad thee has come, and I know thee will do good and not harm."

Aunt Hittie felt a little lump come into her throat. She was not a demonstrative woman, and it was not often that as much as this passed between her and her brother's wife. She simply "run the house, and

let Gracia run the temperance, and that was all there was about it." She was always expecting that Gracia would break down, and come home to stay and be nursed, and she was ready to do it when the time came. She did not think Clifton appreciated Aunt Gracia, or would ever know what a blessing she was to the city, until she was shut away in the old farmhouse, or until she had gone to heaven. As for herself, she was only Aunt Hittie, the housekeeper. She did her temperance and Christian work, by making it possible for Gracia to do hers; but now she had come out on a mission because she must. She was about to do a strange thing, an unheard of thing, and these tender words of confidence from her sister, touched her deeply. She made no sign, however, beyond an added gruffness in her voice, as she replied:

"Just as though that would be a new thing for me, Gracia!" and slipping off her wraps and bonnet and smoothing her hair down with both hands, she took up her basket and said, "Are there any orders, or will I find out everything by my own wit?"

"Thee 'll find out. There 's more of the stuff—directions on every bottle; things in the closet. Thee 'll find it no easy task, sister. Charles Graham is not the same man; he is restless, and irritable; but God will go with thee, Mehitabel."

She went in. Charles Graham looked up at her with a drawn nervous face. He smiled faintly as he saw who had come, and made an effort to extend his hand. He was pale, with a pronounced hectic on his cheeks, and a strange fire in his eyes.

Aunt Hittie stepped briskly to his side, and took his hand, saying :

“ You see I have come to take care of you, Charley, all because of that new boy that took Hortense away.”

He smiled again, and whispered,

“ You are kind : I’m glad it’s you.”

“ Well then, I’m more than glad to come. We must get you out of this: don’t you know?”

“ Yes: but no. I ought to get out, but can’t, never—never; I know that.”

“ Nonsense: you don’t know any such thing.”

“ Yes I do: and ’t isn’t but, either.—O Aunt Hittie!”

He clutched her hand with all his strength, and a strange pleading look came into his eyes.

“ There now: there now!” crooned she, dropping on her knees beside the bed, and stroking his hair.

“ Aunt Hittie, it’s—past time—for—for—that—”

“ What, Charley?”

“ Medicine there: in that room—somewhere—for my cough, and this fever: a—a—h—nobody knows but Horry.”

“ Well, I know. I’ll fix you some.”

She arose and took her basket and went into the little room, in which the requisites for the invalid were neatly disposed out of sight, and began an investigation.

There were syrups, tinctures, bitter, sweet, pungent, with alcohol as the basis in every case. There were opiates and stimulants, in bottles, boxes, powders; enough to suggest an apothecary shop.

Aunt Hittie's face would have been a study for an artist, as she went from one to the other, reading the directions; touching the tip of her tongue to the cork; smelling; shaking; until at last she came to a pint flask of the "Proof brandy;" and a tall black bottle of "Port wine."

"Have they all gone crazy?" she said. "I couldn't ha' believed it. When He comes shall he find common sense, to say nothing of faith on the earth? When such things can happen in Charles Graham's house, anything may be common down on Water Street. O my soul! And Gracia, and Benjamin, and Annie, and Hollis, and John Mark going out and in, and Nora keeping house, and Hortense ready to fight for that doctor,—letting all this stuff go past her to that man, and nobody able to help it. Well! we'll see about it."

"Horry!"

It was a faint aspiration, but had a hiss of impatience in it. Aunt Hittie stepped quickly out.

"O—it's you:" sighed the sick man, wearily. "I'm so faint! so sick! gi' me suthing."

"Yes, Charley:" and she sprang back and opened her basket, taking out a bottle of beef extract. A spirit lamp at hand was utilized, and the food made hot and taken out steaming.

"What?" he questioned, rolling his eyes wildly up at her.

"Something to stop that faintness;" and she put the spoon to his lips. He took it, searching her face with his eyes all the time.

"Aunt Hittie," he said, after a moment, "don't

you know that won't do it? haint had anything to touch the spot to-day: call Horry."

"Hortense can't come: you know she has got to stay with that new boy."

"Bother!"

It was not like Charles Graham, and Aunt Hittie started back, at the strange expression of lip and face. She set her lips firmly, then opened them and said:

"Charles Graham: you are sick, very sick, but you need not act like a sinner on that account."

"O Aunt Hittie! I don't know why I'm left to feel so—so wicked—and—dying too."

"I know why, Charles, I know; and I think you do. Now tell me; don't you know? What have you been taking all this time?"

His eyes seemed to contract, as he looked at her an instant, and then they dropped, and an expression of shame came to his face.

"Charles: you are a Christian; on the verge of the other world. You have lived and fought a good fight against sin: remember Hollis and John Mark."

"And Fletcher: and little Philip:" whispered he, almost gasping. "O my God! I know what you mean, Aunt Hittie. I've felt it coming, but—now: O, I'm so weak and sick; I can't fight! It's the old demon—O—"

"Charles, you needn't fight. I'll fight for you: and Christ will, you know, if only you will let us. May I take all that stuff away? May I give you just what I think best? Will you let me come between you and all?"

There was intense desire and agony in his face, as he opened his lips to reply ; but before he spoke the door opened, and Dr. Rust entered.

"Ah! Good day, madam. A-a-h, my friend, how do you find yourself? How does the tonic agree with you? A-a-h, rather nervous," feeling him over with a light rapid touch; "been having the tonic regularly? I'm afraid that the interest in the new comer has caused our friends to neglect you; ought to have a nurse, must have a—"

"Here I am, doctor," said Aunt Hittie, "just come to devote myself to him."

"A-a-h—good—well, to stay? Ought to have one steady hand."

"Very well: I'll stay with two good steady hands," and she spread her palms before him.

"Ha! Ha! Good! Well: let's see," and he stepped into the side room, and there was a sound of clicking glass.

Charles rolled his eyes; and an eager, greedy look came to his face.

Aunt Hittie laid her hand on his; he glanced at her, then averted his face. The doctor came with a wine glass filled with brandy.

Aunt Hittie put up her hand and cried,

"O doctor! Charley! don't, don't."

The doctor gave her a look of surprise, which changed to contempt; and thrust himself between her and the patient; lifted the pillow, and placed the glass to the eager lips.

"O God, help us!" groaned Aunt Hittie.

"Woman, are you a fool?" bluntly demanded the doctor, turning his head.

"No ; but you are, a wicked, blind fool."

"Very well: we can dispense with you, if you please. I will have a nurse here immediately, who will at least keep the place quiet."

And thus ended Aunt Hittie's mission. Never before had she seen such a forcible illustration of the power of the spirit of rum. Never before had she felt such keen sympathy with those who, like Aunt Gracia, were in the hand-to-hand fight with it.

She gathered up her things, and without even speaking to Aunt Gracia, went out and took a street car toward home ; walking the balance of the way, while her heart surged and sobbed within her.

The house was alone when she entered. She went immediately to her room off the kitchen, laid aside her wraps, and fell upon her knees, when she broke into violent weeping ; she could find no other expression for her prayer, but God understood it. It was all set out in order before Him.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Mrs. Sloan remembered the talk she was having that day with Mrs. Graham, about Bessie Fletcher, so long a time had passed that she was startled.

"Strange," she said to her husband, "that I could have felt so about anything, as I did about that, and then let it slip. But 'twas an awful shock to see poor Charley Graham brought in like that; and then I depended so on Mrs. Graham."

"She's got her hands full now, 'thout lookin' after that girl," observed Robert Sloan.

"That 's so: but that only leaves more for some one else to do: something's got to be done."

"Well, let them whose business 'tis look out for 't then. I reckon it's everybody's business to tend to their own. I know I have to look after my own affairs, from ringing the bell, an' sweeping o' the church, down to spankin' the young 'uns, or standin' up for you when you do it. I wouldn't thank anybody to come 'round here seein' to my children, would you?"

"Of course not, because we take good care of them ourselves. But if you were like Maurice Fletcher, and Janie were like Bessie, and I was in poor Madeline's place, I know I'd be mighty glad if somebody looked after her a little."

"O well, you're all right! I don't doubt but you could bring up another family: and may be you ought to bear a hand under Mrs. Fletcher's load. If you had such a husband as she has, and I knew anything about it, I should want somebody to help you, unless my own feelings had underwent a remarkable change: so you have my consent."

"As though I would have waited for that," she said merrily, looking up into the honest, open face of her sturdy husband.

"You would have your own way I suppose, any how," replied he, with a quiet chuckle.

"Yes indeed, and take you in tow too, just as I intend to do in this matter. Honestly Rob, something's got to be done, and it's too much for women to do alone. Just think of women being left alone in trying to keep their children safe from bad men. It's outrageous! You men ought to make that young scapegrace Griffin, afraid to speak to Bessie again."

"I don't know how that could be done as long as she isn't at all dangerous."

"Dangerous! she is dangerous to him, and he to her; and I think if 'twas our Janie, somebody not far off would make himself dangerous too."

"Yaw! yaw! I guess he would: and Fletcher ought to be cowed. He's the fellow to deal with. No doubt Hank Griffin's a scoundrel, but he's green; and just floating with the current. Don't you think something ought to be done to just save him a little too? You women forget the boys, in your zeal for the girl. Just think of the temptations he

has to meet, though how can you think of 'em, when you don't know nothin' about 'em. There's that Bridget McGuire, now: she's just the hardest case to encounter in this city. She got Monk roped in long ago; and they've laid hold o' Griffin, and they are likely between 'em to get Bess; and Deacon Griffin and Maurice Fletcher 's just given 'em leave: one by his selfishness, 'at makes 'im blind; and 'tother by his natural meanness."

"That's all so, Robert, and the more 'tis so, the more we must be up an' doin'. I don't know much, but I've learned a few things; and one of 'em is that a bad girl or boy makes it more unsafe for mine; so something's got to be done."

"So you said afore."

"Well: and you stand there and look as stolid as a stone!"

"I can sit down," and he did.

"Sit down! I don't know why you should try to tease me so about this. Are we going to sit down here, and see the ruin comin' to poor Madeline, and her children, and do nothing?"

"Signs of the times in this corner of the earth, say no."

"Your good easy nature is a sort o' a nice cushion to rest on, Rob, but it isn't worth much to stand on to reach up higher, or to hitch to. I did think, though, for our children's sake, you'd be serious and help me, instead o' laughin' at me, and hinderin'," and she had a little quaver in her voice.

"I'm not going to hinder: go on; pitch in; I'll back ye, Janet, 'deed I will."

"All right ; I'm going right out this very day. I'm ashamed to think I forgot it even for the Grahams. Charley Graham has his ticket through to the New Jerusalem: and could get along without us: and I guess Hortense would survive if I turned my attention to the Fletchers."

"Mrs. Graham has hosts o' friends, besides a store o' good sense, but it would be well to set somebody to watch that doctor of theirs—Charley'll be breaking his pledge 'fore he knows it, if somebody don't look out."

"Why ? What do you mean ?"

"That old Doctor Rust pours the whiskey down the throats o' his patients wholesale."

So ? Well, Charley Graham can stand it if anybody can, but I do think it's useless."

Mrs. Sloan was deeply in earnest in all she had said to her husband ; but before she could possibly bring matters about in her household to execute the commission in Bessie's behalf, a carriage load of country friends on a shopping expedition alighted at her door, and there was a long table full at dinner.

Next day the baby was fretful ; had taken cold, and she must stay in with him. The day after, the cold had developed into measles, then followed weeks in which she was shut in, and the house grew into a hospital. If the something to be done was dependent upon women, it appeared to Mrs. Sloan that poor Bessie must go on to her ruin.

The Fletcher home was not a cheerful place at its best. The house was old, divided into tenements, of

which they occupied four rooms, on the second floor ; the same floor which had served comfortably when they were but two, and to which there had been added nothing but children, smoke, and decay ; the marks of time not o'er friendly, as one must admit. The rooms were approached from the street by a public stair and hall, and on the rear through a narrow court up the stairway which Robert Sloan had mended. Madeline Fletcher had long since lost the ability to keep up the practice of the domestic arts that had made the place attractive in spite of itself, in the early days of her life in it, and long since the notes of happy song that had filled it had fallen in sobs from her lips, and left them ashen. She grew silent and nerveless ; days would pass in which she scarcely spoke a word, even to the children, going as long as she had strength about the necessary work, putting the food, scanty and poorly cooked, on the table, just as it happened to slip from her hand, often going off out of sight while her husband and children ate. The effect of this upon the children was demoralizing in the extreme. They ate like animals, until Bessie arose to the emergency by some latent womanliness and refinement, and took upon herself the work of correcting these evils. She waited upon the little ones, tidied the table, and as she grew older and developed strength, it came about that the care of the house and children, and latterly of the mother, came upon her. While still very young, she seemed to comprehend the situation, and espoused the cause of her mother against all the world, and all circumstances, the father and husband included.

Mrs. Fletcher was kept closely to her room these days, because of her own weakness and the little one, who never seemed more than just alive. She used to go to church, and occasionally to sit an hour with Mrs. Graham; but for months she had not crossed the threshold of her room, while the children ran the streets and alleys, and her husband squandered his earnings in Dem's gambling den. Whatever was the impression made upon Maurice Fletcher by his interview with Charles Graham, he said nothing about it at home. The only thing to mark this time in the home calendar was the fact that he came in more under the influence of liquor than had been usual during the working days. He had always intended to practice abstinence while on duty, but he had been obliged to acknowledge that the habit of drink was growing upon him. As he had been forced to recognize this truth, unpleasant reflections had kept him company. There were times when he even trembled as he realized the possibilities of a drunkard's future for himself. Unmanly and brutish as he was in many respects, he still had a physical and professional pride, which revolted at the thought of such degradation. To lie down in the gutter and let anything run over him; to lose control of himself, and the power to dominate his wife and children; to become a laughing stock for street-boys; to wear his coat wrong side out, or possibly to wear some other man's rags, taken in the drunkard's exchange, which he had seen so many times, were things of which he did not like to think. He had been calling all his will power to the front, to stand guard over the appetite which threatened to

break through all restraint, and drag him helplessly to ruin. He knew well what was before him in a business way, if the drink passion should really get the better of him. A drunken engineer would not be tolerated an hour in the firm of Date, Graham and Co. And now, since he would have Horace Date to deal with, untempered by Charles Graham, he knew that the manner of his going would be without the least ceremony of kindly interest if he should fail to keep in condition for service. And once discharged for such cause, was to lose his grip of life, and become a vagabond, without the power to provide food or shelter for his family. If he failed them, they might be better cared for by others, but this he could not consent to. They should never live by any hands but his. Poor as was the support he gave them, it was all they had a right to. Proud in his meanness, he would have knocked any man down who should venture to take them anything, with which to eke out their scanty wardrobe or bill of fare; or would have vented his wrath on them. And yet there was in him the germ, that, touched by the Spirit of God, might develop into true manliness.

During the last month he had been under a terrible pressure. He had begun to feel the power of appetite. It had been like a tiger's kitten with which he had had fine sport; a creature to test his muscle in an exhilarating way, until it had come to put him to the severest strain; and now at last was a thing terrible, from which he doubted if he could escape. He had taken the case into consideration, and deter-

mined to buy no more drinks at any bar. He would get a certain flask filled just so often, and nothing should tempt him to go beyond this. Sometimes he had thought he would even "swear off" entirely.

He had been interested in the change in Hollis Ellenwood. He had been in the factory years when Hollis began, in a subordinate capacity, and had watched him all the way. He saw him as he went down the swift incline to the ruin that overtook him; and as he turned and began the upward course. He despised him for the weakness which had led him to seize the pledge, and that "crutch of religion," to help himself with, and yet he stood somewhat in awe of the moral power which surrounded the young superintendent, as he went out and in before him. He had watched him as a man conscious of some secret deadly disease, might another who was experimenting with remedies. And yet he had never permitted Hollis to approach him on the subject of his new life, but kept him at a distance with a surliness that was impenetrable. His seeming indifference was but a mark to cover the real, almost feverish interest, as his own sense of danger increased. Sometimes he wished he might see Hollis drunk again. It would be a relief from the tormenting annoyance of noticing his steady development into pure manhood before him. He could bear the sight of his clean, glad, strong face, no better than sick eyes can endure a light. And yet the thought of a failure in this transformation, a flaw in this living testimony

for Christ, was more dreadful than anything else. He often thought he would set himself to work to invent some scheme by which Hollis should be brought down to the old level ; but knew in his soul, that to succeed would be to suffer a loss which he could not afford.

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CHAPTER XVII.

NO one knew of the strife that fretted Maurice Fletcher: and yet Hollis Ellenwood and Charles Graham had both noticed the hungry, jealous suspicions, and the all-eager look, with which he furtively regarded Hollis, whenever he came within range. They had talked about it; Hollis had said to Mr. Graham:

“ I should almost think Fletcher was watching for my life, if I had ever come in his way; ” and Mr. Graham had answered:

“ I’ve noticed it, and it is for your life. I know the fellow as well as anybody can, I think. Sullen, morose, disagreeable as he is, I believe it is because he has somehow lost his self-respect, and cannot forgive himself; and because you have got hold of something that he wants. It is your new life he is lying in wait for. He’d steal it from you if he could, for himself.”

Out of this talk, which ran on for hours, the plan was developed that placed John Mark in the furnace room, as fireman, ostensibly; but really, as a fisherman after this man’s soul.

John Mark soon found that he had undertaken no enviable task, if considered alone by itself. But it

had been prayerfully done, and supported by the sympathetic interest of the few who were in the secret. He went carefully about his part. He had much latent wisdom and tact. He was good at attending to his own affairs; and by seeming to ignore Fletcher, attending simply to his fires, obeying any orders, as a machine might have obeyed its motor, he not only made his place tolerable, but at length began to command as much respect as Fletcher ever gave to any man.

Between Maurice Fletcher, and his daughter Bessie, there was war. She could not brook his neglect of her mother and the little ones, especially the baby, which he had never noticed since it was born. The total disregard of their needs angered her, and aroused all her spirit to defiance. She met him boldly, and commanded a sort of respect from him. The fire in her black eyes, her absolute fearlessness, gave her a peculiar power over him. He was sure she had no love for him: he knew he did not deserve it; and felt that she stood between him and the rest of the family, a wall of defence; dark, threatening as a cloud toward him; sweetness, brightness itself toward the broken-hearted mother and cowering little girls.

The child had few resources of pleasure, outside of her own brave spirit. Shut in by poor and insufficient clothing, as well as the work which kept her busy; with her mother's sorrowful face always before her; ignored by the more favored girls of her age; it is not to be wondered at, if she responded to Bridget McGuire's expressions of friendship, and

was easily persuaded to join her and her friends, after the children were in bed, and her mother made comfortable for the evening. Bessie, however, although exposed to all that Mrs. Sloan had suggested, had a guard of which she did not know, in the strong, honorable nature which had come to her from somewhere, at her birth ; and afforded a persistent, steady check to the approach of anything impure. Innocent, unprotected, unconscious of evil, incapable of translating the attentions offered her into any but the purest language ; she went on her defiant way, developing daily under the cheap calico dress, a figure and grace, which distinguished her more and more ; while in her heart there burned the mingled passions of brooding love for the helpless mother, and contempt for her father, and of pride, with its uncanny concomitant of shame.

Many a battle had this father and daughter fought out, in which Maurice Fletcher had the sense of defeat ; but none had ever been so bitter, as that which occurred the next day after the interview with Charles Graham. Money was needed in the house. The little sick mother and helpless babe must be made comfortable ; and faithful Bessie was at her wits end. There was no longer any credit ; the rent was still unpaid ; and Mr. Griffin keep coming about, and grew more cross with every visit.

This was the morning of pay day. Bessie had been planning for days to get possession of the money, and so divert it from Dem's, to mother and the children. As a preliminary she got the best breakfast possible, from the small stores ; but it was very scanty.

Her father took his place at the table, and surveyed it with contempt. He poured out a cup of what was called coffee, then scanned the table again. Bessie was busy getting the little girls to the table. At last he called angrily,

“Bess! bring the milk and sugar.”

“You will have to go without,” she replied, fired by his tone. “I have only a spoonful of sugar and a cup of milk left; that must be saved for mother.”

Fletcher’s blood stood in his veins: but he had had no whiskey that morning; his bottle had been drained early in the night, and he was weak and nerveless. He gave one ugly look at the black eyes, glowing at him from across the table; and was silent. Bessie helped the children to corn mush and glucose, and went on, entirely unmindful of the diplomacy she had planned.

“And you must bring home every cent of the money you get to-day, or—”

A call from her mother’s room interrupted her. While she was gone, her father got ready for reply; and greeted her return with a sarcastic smile, and an—

“Or what, my lady?”

“Or—you won’t get anything more very soon—”

“Whew! you going to burn the town?”

“I’ll tell you what I will do: I’ll go to Mr. Date, and tell him all about you, and demand your wages.”

“Hi! Hi! you will, will you?”

“Yes sir, I will—”

“And a pretty mess you’d make of it. Suppose you’d make him believe all that you folks here at home seem to think about me—eh? ’twould be the

last any of us 'ud get. I'd be set adrift, and you'd all starve."

"We're likely to starve as 'tis, for all you."

"Guess you'd find a difference, young lady, if I lost my job: you'd have to work for your own living then, I'm thinking."

"I'm working now: but what kind of a living do I get? I could go out and earn three dollars a week, but for—"

The thought that it was the mother and little ones that kept her, made her leave the sentence unfinished.

"But for me, I suppose: you stay for my comfort, I suppose," sarcastically.

"No, I do not: you need not flatter yourself: unless it's for you, in taking care of these children of yours. I stay because they must have me; and—for—my—mother. But unless the bills are paid, and the rent, pretty soon; there'll be no way but for me to go out and find something to do, to get bread for them."

The utterance of this fact caused a sudden throb in her heart. It was so terribly, appallingly true, the case was so desperate, that for a moment she was moved to pleading. She went on, the fire of her eyes cooled in a mist, and a tremor in her tone:

"O—if you just would bring home the money, father, and let us have it to pay rent, and bills, and get a few things, and—and if you would only just do right by us all, we might be so comfortable."

If she had stopped there with that unusual sound of a sob, which punctuated the sentence, in his ears,

it might have been better. But the sudden break in her voice, the rush of tears, with all the rest, angered her. She hastily dashed her hand over her eyes, swallowed hard, and in a sharp tone went on:

“But you won’t; you’ll give it all to Dem; as if he hadn’t enough out of us yet. You’ll game away what you don’t drink up, and mamma must die, for all I can see. O—you aint half a man! You don’t deserve a wife and children. Look at us! look at her, and then look at that old photograph you took to the war. O—”

He sprang from the table, and clutching the chair as if to lift it, cried:

“Now you just shut up!”

The little girls ran out. Bessie did not flinch or move. Harley, who had come in during the scene, and began his breakfast of mush and molasses, sat, as he always did of late, when these two quarrelled, looking on with an expression of keen enjoyment at the sport. Bessie stood, looking her father in the eye, hers aflame with passionate indignation.

“Strike!” she cried: “I’d just as lief. It’s true, all I’ve said, and lots more. My mother was as sweet and lovely a lady as can be found in Clifton—lovelier: and now look at her: she’s what you’ve made her: and—I’ve just got to have some money to-night; I will have it, or I’ll make a fuss. I’ll go to Mr. Date—or Mr. Graham, if he is sick, and I don’t care what comes of it. Mamma’s got to have things; she shall not stay this way; I looked at that old photograph and vowed it last night. And then folks we owe have got to be paid. I shall go down to the

factory before paying time ; you can give it to me as soon as you get it. I'll give you that chance to keep things still : but if you try to get away with it, I'll tell. I'll scream on you, and don't care if you are discharged. I'd discharge you from being the father of this family quick, if I could, and take the place myself."

A feeble wail from the other room broke into the pause she made just to take breath, and she ran in to answer it, leaving her father white with rage, but weak with self-contempt before the truth.

Her voice dropped down the scale from her high passion, to the tender crooning and cooing of a veritable little mother ; so unlike the sharp defiance of a moment before, that both Mr. Fletcher and Harley were moved by it, each in characteristic fashion.

Harley laughed : slapping his knee, shaking his head, and rolling his eyes in a spasm of mirth.

"Ha ha ! aint that rich ?" he cried ; "you ought to be at 'tother end of the line, ol' man ! But she does give it to you !"

The laugh was genuine : a hearty boyish cry of delight : but it cut into the core of his father's heart, as nothing else ever did. This, his boy, was more to Maurice Fletcher, than anything else in the world. As Charles Graham had told his wife years ago, he had a selfish, brutish pride in the boy, which had followed his growth until now ; and his laugh, with the attendant remark, stung him through.

"You young rascal !" he said, and made a feint of boxing him. The boy ducked his head, with an-

other laugh ; and tipping his chair over under him, got away, and ran out after the little girls.

Fletcher took a step toward his wife's room, as though he would carry the battle into that retreat ; but reconsidered, and instead, took his hat and went out down the street.

He knew that Bessie was right in all that she had said. Resent it as he might, the force of the truth would not be thrust aside. The fact that it had been uttered by unfilial lips, made it none the less truth. He shrank from it, but it pursued, and goaded him. Especially the allusions to the change in Madeline. He would not submit to have that thrown up to him. The laugh of his boy ; the terror of the little girls, with their wizzen faces ; the wail of the baby that he had never seen ; the pale hollow face which he knew pressed the pillow in the front room ; the room with its tattered paper hangings ; its broken ceiling ; its rickety furniture ; Bessie, strong in spirit, defiant, domineering, these all followed him, and goaded him to rage. Meanwhile, the demon thirst hung at his throat, and his bottle was empty. He became reckless, furious, and did what he had never done before : went around to Dem's on his way to the factory. He had reserved Dem's always, for Saturday night, and Sabbath. Prudence would not allow him to indulge in the attractions of this haunt of boon companions during the week ; places where there was less temptation to linger, must suffice then ; once there, he was almost sure to stay ; and but for the forethought of Dem himself, the day might have ended differently.

Dem had an eye to the main chance, always. He

was never in a hurry ; was willing to work at arm's length. Maurice Fletcher, sitting down in his place over a glass of whiskey, eight hours before he drew his pay, was an unprofitable customer. It was for his interest that the engineer should be in his place, to blow the factory whistle on time. So with the art of a diplomat, he quieted the rage of the man, and saw him out, and on his way in time, although with more of the poison on board than he had ever taken with him into the presence of his engine.

"There'll be a smash up one of these days down there," was Dem's mental remark, as he stood watching Fletcher down the street. "He's not going to wear much longer, getting threadbare as a last year's scarecrow. Must make all I'm going to off o' him quick. He'd a settled down for the day, I do b'lieve, and let the old engine run herself."

Fletcher went through the work of the morning in a manner that attracted John Mark's attention, and he determined to keep watch. Fletcher kept in until noon, taking frequent "pulls" at his bottle on the sly. John Mark could but comprehend the situation, and was very uneasy, but kept his distance. He could as yet see no way for him to do anything. His heart was heavy with prayer. At noon Fletcher went out and did not return until after one o'clock, so John Mark sounded the whistle. Fletcher came in soon, however, and threw a side long glance at John, as he was apparently busy about the furnace. Maurice started up the engine, and went around examining the parts. John saw that he was too full of liquor to be competent, and made up his mind

that he must let him know somehow that he was cognizant of the fact. In trying to oil the journal, Fletcher staggered, and reeled, and would have fallen.

"What's the matter?" cried John Mark, springing to his aid. "You are—are sick?"

"Y-e-s, I—I guess—I am. Here, do that f-for me. I'll f-feel better soon; h-hurts me to r-reach. There—'ll right—m-must keep the j-journal wet, y-you know, or we'd b-blow up. M-mighty close watching to r-run such an engine!"

"Yes, indeed, I know that;" and John Mark applied the oil, examined matters generally, and then stepped down from the beam upon which he had been standing. "Mustn't take any risks here, Mr. Fletcher," and he looked over beyond him at the drive wheel. "Takes a competent man to have charge of such a creature as she is."

Fletcher looked at John Mark with the suspicion of guilty self-consciousness in his eye, and retorted in a touchy tone:

"I've run this engine since you were in girl's petticoats; don't need any suggestions from you; go where you b'long an' tend to your fire."

John Mark retreated without a word, but with his purpose confirmed to watch affairs closely. Fletcher went on muttering and grumbling, as he staggered around, and John Mark held council with conscience. Just two things restrained him from reporting the condition at once. First, he knew how to keep the engine in safe operation for a few hours; and secondly, he thought exposure meant expulsion to

Fletcher, and he felt that he must try to give him one more chance if he could, and maybe he might find in this, the opportunity he coveted. So he said to himself:

“I’ll keep watch. I know enough to keep things safe, and I’ll take the chance and the responsibility.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

FLETCHER went out several times in the course of the afternoon. At such times John Mark would run in, mount the box, and apply the oil to the journal. His principal knowledge of a stationary engine was confined to the office which the journal sustained to the great wheel, and the governors. After a well-filled boiler, and steady fire, a well lubricated journal meant safety; while the journal dry, meant disaster. So with this before him all that afternoon, he stood in the breach, and by his generous watchfulness protected the reckless engineer, and the unconscious workmen from danger. He was taking what seemed an unwarrantable responsibility for the sake of a soul, and a chance to win it from self to Christ. Sometimes the suggestion would come that the risk was too great, for even such an object; that even if he could surely avert disaster, his attempt to cover this man from the consequences of his criminal disregard of obligation, made him really a party to the crime. That by his silence he became wholly responsible for anything that might result; and yet, he could not find it in his heart to do any other than he had purposed.

As the afternoon wore away, Fletcher became

silent. John Mark could not see him without again stepping out of what had been called "his place." He waited anxiously for some time, for some sound or movement, then ventured to come out and investigate. He found him in a heavy sleep in the corner where he usually sat.

"Dead drunk!" ejaculated John Mark; "well, there may be exposure after all. I shall be blamed, unless I can arouse him and get him out in shape, after shutting down time. At all events, I must run the engine now, and He for whose sake I am making this mistake, if it is such, must help me out. Wonder if mother will know how much I need her to pray for me?—guess she will—for she knows 'most everything."

He examined the different parts of the engine. The governors worked, the great wheel revolved, the piston rod moved back and forth, as though nothing was the matter. The great steam chest breathed on, as steadily as though it had settled down to the patient labor of a life time. John Mark walked back and forth, vigilant, anxious, but prayerful and assured, while the engineer slept the drunkard's brutal sleep.

"Where is father?"

John Mark turned quickly at the voice. Bessie stood on the threshold, her black eyes burning with the intensity of the purpose which had got thus far in the effort to execute itself.

John Mark had never seen Bessie before, and now stood abashed before the challenge of her imperious gaze.

She waited, balanced on one foot an instant, and

then, tossing her head, came on in, and looked around the great boiler.

"There!" at length said John Mark, pointing with his hand.

Bessie had seen him and stopped—

"Drunk!" The scorn of her tone John had never heard equalled.

She threw a look up at the wheel; stepped back, and swept every part of the engine with her eyes.

"Who's running her?" she demanded, turning a white face before John Mark.

"I am."

"Do you know how?"

"Yes: at least for now, I do."

"How long's he been so?"

"Been coming on all day; but not so very long since he was so—"

"Do they know it?" lifting her eyebrows toward the upper floor.

"No: 'f course not."

"Why, of course? they ought to."

"Yes: but—"

"But what? Do you know what it means?"

"Yes: I know, unless I had known what to do."

"And you dared take such a risk?"

"Yes."

"How dare you?"

"For His sake."

"For his sake? Do you like him so well as that?"

John Mark flushed a little, and was silent. "Like him?" was it that? Could he confess to this girl

his high and holy purpose? While he waited, she cried out:

"Well, I don't! I wouldn't do it; and you better not. What if things went wrong? You can't—you must not—they must know."

She turned to go. He sprang before her.

"No no, not this time: they must not know. Give me a chance and I'll—we will—God will save him."

The girl's lip curled. She looked saucily up into John Mark's face, and laughed a musical peal.

"Save him! God! there is no God to save him."

"O you don't mean such a thing," gasped John Mark.

"Yes I do: and if there was, He wouldn't touch him. I'm going up to the office; let me pass."

"No: don't go. Don't say a word. I've watched all day, and now it's most time to shut down. I'll have a hold on him. I was as far gone as he, once: farther, only I was younger, and God saved me. I'll talk to him: we'll save him; wouldn't you like that? He'd be a true father then: wouldn't you like that?"

Bess was looking up at the young man with changing expressions, all, however, of doubt and scorn. But this took her heart by surprise; and it spake in a sudden rush of color to her cheeks, and tears to her eyes. A true father. O! could such a mine of richness ever open to her? such an one as Clement Graham had? John took note of this in her face, and went on.

"I can say things to him now: I know I can: I feel it: let's give him a trial: you, and I, and God together. I respect you for your principle about

them up-stairs: I've carried a heavy load all day 'bout them: but you—of course it means more to you than anybody, if he should get bounced, and yet, I see you'd do the right thing. I honor that: yet I'm sure I'm not doing wrong. I know how to run her, and steady her, when she's set agoing. There's been no real danger, only I took it all on myself. Let me alone with it all now: I'll talk to him."

"He won't listen."

"He'll have to: you 'n I've got a hold on him, I say,—and I'll take Hollis in—"

"You don't know him:" interrupted Bessie.

"Give me a chance then, to find him out."

"A great find that will be: he'll abuse you. Talk about me, and you, and God, and him, and anything good coming out of it." She did not laugh any more, but a deep sadness spread over her face.

"Well, we'll do what we can now with this chance, and if he won't hear, if he won't take the chance I'm going to give him, why then, the other thing must be done. I'm going to try to awaken him now, and don't you spoil everything by telling."

"All right, I'll keep still: but they'll see for themselves. He's got to go for his pay. I came down after the money, and I've got to have it."

"Yes, that's all right; he isn't fit to handle money now. We'll see 'bout that. Now he must be got awake; but first I must blow the quarter whistle."

He opened the valve, and sent out a long sonorous blast.

"They'll know that isn't him:" laughed Bessie.
"He's always had the same kind of a toot."

"Maybe they'll think he's trying a new tune," said John Mark.

He went around to awaken the sleeper. Bessie stood by looking on. John shook him, but he was like a log. Bessie came, and with no gentle or reverential touch, undertook the task, but their utmost efforts elicited nothing beyond a grunt.

"What shall we do?" said John Mark, in a troubled voice. "I don't want anybody to find him like this. I couldn't make Mr. Date understand."

"Course not; he'd take you for a loon, sure 'nough," laughed Bessie. "Look out! I'm going to do something," and she seized the hose which was just at her hand, drew on it until she had the nozzle in position, and with a grim determination on her face, she opened the screw and sent the full force of the cold stream upon his head and neck. He started, struggled, ejaculated, and finally, beating the flood with both hands, staggered to his feet.

"H-help! I'm drowning!"

Bessie laughed a sardonic laugh, and passed the stream up and down, from head to foot and back again; aiming at eyes and mouth, then at the back of his head, until John Mark laid his hand upon her arm. She looked up at him with her face glowing, her eyes dancing. She shut the water off at this mute request.

"There now!" she cried, turning to her father, "see if you're awake, and sober enough to walk."

"You—Bess," he gasped, blowing the water away from his mouth. "Wh-hat's broke loose? Augh! what 'd I fall into?"

"Fall into—" she began in a sarcastic tone, but was arrested by the appearance of Hollis Ellenwood who at that moment came in. He took in the scene at a glance. Bessie with the nozzle of the hose still in her hand; her father standing dripping; his knees bent, hands drooping, jaw hanging, eyes blinking, his whole figure crouching, while his face wore a dazed expression, ludicrous in the extreme. But Hollis was too deeply interested to see this aspect of the situation. Bessie was sobered at the sight of Ellenwood's grave face; and John Mark behind the fly wheel looked the very picture of anxiety.

Hollis glanced from one to the other, his face changing from grave to stern.

"What does this mean? what has happened?" he asked, taking the hose from the hand of the girl.

"You can see for yourself; I have no explanation to make," she replied pertly.

"John?"

John Mark felt that he must answer the question, thus made personal; and yet he could not make up his mind to tell all in Fletcher's presence. He had had a deep and earnest purpose before him, ever since he entered the factory, and had carried the burden of it all through this anxious day; and it must not be defeated. So, although he recognized Hollis as the superintendent, yet this was secondary to him as a Christian fellow-worker; so he answered by a shake of the head, and a sign, emphasized by the appeal in his face.

Hollis scrutinized him an instant. He read: "Please don't press the question now," and was

silent. He began to lay the hose back in its place, stepping gingerly through the pool on the floor. Fletcher was thoroughly awake, and sobered; and straightening himself, began fumbling nervously about the engine. John Mark went around, and taking the long poker, went to work getting the fires ready to leave. Hollis followed him into the furnace room, and stood beside him, waiting for him to speak. He had great confidence in John Mark, and loved him as a brother. At last John Mark looked up and said :

“ Don’t be in a hurry, old fellow ; wait for me ; it’s all right.”

“ All right ? ”

“ Yes : I’ll prove it.”

“ Very well ; I trust you, John Mark.”

Bessie stood leaning against the door jam, watching the three men, wondering what would be done ; and her crisp little brain was busy with plans for getting control of her father’s earnings.

Fletcher, in coming to himself, and recalling the events of the day, and realizing that he had been unconscious for hours, was alarmed. He lost every consideration, save that of safety. He examined the journal, and register, and belts, with nervous haste ; but finding everything in order, he began to sense his present condition. He moved slowly, with an air of dejection and humility, such as neither Bessie nor Hollis, who were watching him, had ever seen in him before. Once he looked up at Bessie as if about to speak, then dropped his head and was silent. He looked at the clock, and as it was time, blew the old

shut-down "tune" on the steam whistle, and then shut off the power, and let the great throbbing creature settle to her rest, and put her in order for the night. He went and wound the clock, ignoring the water as he stepped about. When all was done, he stood irresolute a moment; then lifting his head with a little shake and a shrug of his shoulder, he looked up at Hollis, and stepped toward him. His expression was that of broken pride. He opened his lips to speak, but said nothing and turned back.

"Well:" cried Bessie, "what are you going to do? You've spent time enough, monkeying; I'm waiting for that money: mother'll need me: hurry up!"

He turned a furious, agonized, nervous face toward her, and lifting his clinched hand, began to pour out a volley of execrations which seemed almost to sizzle in the air.

Hollis stepped quickly toward Bessie, as if to protect her, but with a curl on her lip she said:

"O never mind, Mr. Ellenwood: that's nothing new; he distinguishes himself that way, often."

Then to her father, "You'll have to give me that money just the same; I've got to get something for mother to eat; you'll not get rid of me, but you will show yourself up if you keep on."

"Your father will bring home something," said Hollis, in a conciliatory tone.

"Will he? It'll be the first time in years. It's just this way, Mr. Ellenwood: you may as well know. He brings nothing: we've lived on credit till it's all gone. Bills—bills! I can't get a thing; and mother is sick, and there's the rent, and all the rest.

We're going to starve and die all in a heap, if I don't get that money. That's why I came and waited. He shall not carry it away to-day : and I can't wait any longer ; mother or the baby will want me."

Hot, angry tears filled her eyes as she said this, rapidly, passionately, coming closely to him. Hollis looked down at her, and noticed for the first time that her dress was very thin, and that under the peculiar bright beauty of her face, there was a care-worn look, and a hint of insufficient food. He turned toward Fletcher. He was now thoroughly angry with the man, and would surely have said something rash, but for John Mark. He had come close to Fletcher, and seemed to cover his meanness, with his own sympathetic interest. His face told it, as he met Hollis' angry eyes. The result was that Hollis turned back to Bessie, and said gently,

"Well: you go home to your mother and the baby ; and we will see that this is all right."

"And that I have that money?"

"Yes: it shall be attended to ; you need not stay."

"All right: but—say—we didn't have much dinner: and I can't get one thing: and there are the children ; so be quick about it. Don't you go to sending anything by him, either, or we'll never see it."

"I assure you I will see to this myself," said Hollis. "There, now go." He was in haste to have her gone, for the effect she was having on her father was irritating in the extreme ; he was almost foaming with rage, so Hollis laid his hand on her arm, to turn her

toward the door. Instantly she stiffened under his touch, threw herself away from him, shot a fierce look at him, and walked with a proud dignified carriage out into the passage.

Hollis did not comprehend this action; he stood and looked after her as she followed the passage to the main entrance, then turned toward her father.

“Mr. Fletcher,” he began.

Fletcher braced himself to hear, when Bessie’s shrill, incisive tone broke in upon them again. She had returned, and began to speak before she entered the door.

“I won’t stir out of the house!” she said. “I said I wouldn’t go home without things for the children and mother, and I won’t: so there!”

“Can’t you trust me to keep my word?” asked Hollis.

“No, I won’t trust any man’s word: and beside I can’t wait for it.”

The manner in which Fletcher had straightened himself when Hollis spoke to him, and the feelings struggling in his own breast, made Hollis glad of this interruption. It would be better to leave John Mark and Fletcher alone; so he turned to Bessie, saying,

“Very well: we will go and see about this.” So he led the way out, closing the door behind him.

CHAPTER XVII.

M AURICE FLETCHER had been made ashamed many times, but at last he was thoroughly alarmed. When he came to himself, his fear amounted almost to frenzy, until he had satisfied himself that the engine was all right.

When Hollis turned and spoke his name, he prepared himself to receive the shock of a prompt dismissal. When Bessie made her demand for the money, he was desperately conscious of how small an amount it would be, in case of inability to get work, which he considered imminent. The thing which had been foreshadowed on his imagination a score of times, was here at last, and he was disgraced.

When Hollis went out with Bessie, and closed the door, Fletcher dropped into the chair near him and buried his face in his hands with a groan. He thought he was alone: a sound at the furnace revealed the presence of the fireman, and he called :

“ John.”

“ Yes, sir,” and John Mark came and stood before him.

“ Has any one been down here but Ellenwood and Bess ? ”

“ No, sir.”

" 'Spose you reported me."

" No, sir."

" Not ? But you will ? "

" No, sir."

" No ? Well, Ellenwood will ; I deserve it, we might have been blown to eternity."

" I know it."

Fletcher looked up at John, then down at the floor.

" Unless I had known what to do."

" You have taken care of her ? " and Fletcher patted the great steel chest.

" Yes, the best I knew how."

" And you wouldn't have reported me ? They wouldn't have known if Hol hadn't ha' come in ? "

" No, sir."

" They'd 'a blamed you if they ever found out."

" Very likely."

" But you'd 'a' stood it ? "

" I would, gladly, if—" he paused and turned partly about.

" If what ? "

" Without any if. I'd 'a' stood it anyhow."

" Well, I could 'a' thought it of Charles Graham, if he'd 'a' been sure there'd 'a' been no wrong in it ; but I didn't 'spose anybody else in the world would 'a' lost such a chance o' getting me into trouble. I appreciate it, John Mark. If I am a mean, disagreeable fellow, I can recognize a generous act when I see it, and if this aint generosity, I never saw it. Shake ! "

He reached out his hand. John took it warmly.

"But you know," he said, "one couldn't keep doing this sort o' thing. It's a great responsibility for me to take. I tell you I've sweated under it; it's been an awful day."

"What in the name o' common sense d' ye do it for? You might ha' just turned me over to old Date, and served me right."

"I did it because you see I've been there myself, and—"

"Yes, yes, you do know 'bout it, I guess; you had a narrow escape, and Hollis too. Mighty big lot o' the girl's money to burn up, but they say she's able to stand it. Heard about it in the time of it, of course, never liked to think 'bout it, though. How was it, anyhow? He pulled you out o' the fire, and you stopped your fooling and—"

"Mr. Fletcher!"

It was Hollis. He had a slip of paper in his hand with a pencil.

"If you will sign this order it will save any questions. It's to the effect that your month's pay shall be delivered to your daughter."

Fletcher took it and looked it over. His expression changed from the manly tone it had taken on while talking to John Mark, to a sullen brutishness. As he kept his eyes bent upon the paper, thinking, an evident conflict passed through him, in which manhood triumphed, if we judge by the result, for he laid the order on the frame of the engine, signed it, and returned it, saying:

"Guess that means dry weather to me."

"And a comfortable time at home, eh? The less saloon the more home," said Hollis.

He went out with the order.

"Have to keep sober now, sure 's shot," said Fletcher.

"Certainly, looks that way," said John Mark. "But say, it's anything but dry weather with you now; do you know you are wet?"

Fletcher got up from the chair, and looked down at his dripping garments.

"I should say I am wet."

John Mark was casting about all this time, for means by which to keep Fletcher, as long as possible; and here was an opportunity, not to be ignored; so he said:

"Suppose you come in by the furnace and dry."

"All right. That Bess is a tartar."

John Mark did not reply to this statement.

Fletcher went in before the furnace, opened the door, divested himself of his outer clothing, which he spread on the clay top of the furnace to dry, while he stood turning himself before the coals, like a roast on a spit. John Mark busied himself about, cleaning up the floor, occasionally giving the clothes a turn, while he pondered the situation. His heart was too full for easy speaking, yet he wanted to say so much. This was the very opportunity he had coveted, yet now he had it, he did not know how to use it. He was a man of prayer. Out of many sorrows such as sin brings, he had learned the wondrous secret; and now, like a psalm without words, there exhaled out of the depths of his soul, a prayer, to which there must be

given some outer expression. He longed to do superhuman things; to bend heaven down into that place, and lift this man into it, whether he would or no. O, to bring salvation to this lost soul! was his cry, and yet what could he do?

Fletcher watched him, as he swept the water out, and turned the clothes. At last John Mark looked up, and found the bleared eyes fixed upon him. He stopped.

"I'd like to know what you've been thinking about, Jack," said Fletcher.

"Thinking about? O, I'm more than thinking." He dropped the broom, and gave Fletcher's coat another turn.

"I see. You've flopped that coat fifty times if you have once."

John stopped and leaned against the wall, with his hands behind him, for a minute; then he came up close to Fletcher, face to face; laid his hands on his shoulders, and said,

"Fletcher, you must stop drinking, or—"

"Or?"

"O—r—r—r."

"Yes, I know:—well!"

"Then, what are you going to do about it?"

"You tell."

"Shall I?"

"Go ahead!"

"You—are—going—to—stop!"

"So?—yes: one whole month, any how, because—"

"Forever—because—"

"Hold on! tell me how you did it first. I've looked at you and Hollis a thousand times, and wished I knew. But I'd a knocked either of you down, if you'd said a word to me about it. But now I'm tame, John, for the time being. Mad'line wouldn't know me. I haven't any iron left in my knuckles. When I think o' what must ha' happened if you hadn't kept that amiable creature moist about the gills, I'm weak as a rag. Now's your chance: I'm on the perch; fire away: who knows but you may bring me down."

"O, Mr. Fletcher, I do want to tell you: but some how now I can't say much. I've thought I'd give anything to have a chance to say something, but I can't."

"I thought you were loaded, by the way you looked."

"I am: heavily. But Fletcher, you know what you ought to do: you ought to stop."

"John Mark: I've given you leave. I tell you I'm on the perch: I've asked you to fire away—do you stand leaning on a gun, and tell a pigeon it ought to come down and be cooked? no: you bring it down, or you don't get it. It's likely to be that way with this chicken."

"Don't jest about it, Fletcher: it's too serious," said John, helplessly.

"I won't. It is serious: and I tell you I'm bound to keep sober for a whole month."

"It ought to be for life, Fletcher; you ought to be a better man every way; do it, that's all."

"All—don't take long to say it, does it? But how? that's the question; how?"

"How? Pray, Fletcher, pray."

"Boy: you talk like a fool! You're not a gun, after all, only a fizz."

"I know it: I am. I was wild to think I could do anything. But I know this: you must stop drinking. No use in trying to be eloquent to prove that to you: you know it already. I wish I could tell you all I know about it, and make you understand it; but if you'll do what I did, you'll find out better 'n I can tell you."

"Now you're getting warm; what is it you did? That's the thing I'm waiting to know."

"I just stopped, and then I prayed to God, and let my mother and Hollis help me. I wish you'd talk with my mother, she'd tell you; I thought I could, but I can't. Everything you need comes from God for the asking—that's praying, just asking and believing. Please excuse me; I know you do not believe in it. I knew it before I began, but it's true, just the same. I aint no talker, I threw away my chance to be a scholar, you know; but I am a Christian, now, instead of a drunken vagabond; and that's just what you ought to be. It's one or 'tother with such fellows as we are. You know what I did; how I wasted my time at school, and the money my father worked hard for to send me, where I could get a good education. How I lied to them, and gambled, and drank, and ran away, and did everything bad. And after I had set fire to Annie's house, and made Hollis risk his life to get me out, and all that; then I prayed,

and God heard me, and saved me, and gave me the change I'd been wanting. I know it sounds foolish to you; but there's life in it to such as we are. And Mr. Fletcher, I'd try it if I were you, indeed I would. I've been praying in your stead all this day: I'm going to keep at it. I said when I found out how you was: 'I'll tell nobody but God about Fletcher being drunk; I'll stand before him, and hide him, and give him one chance with God.' "

"'Twas kind in you, John: a regular soldier-boy trick: makes it seem 's if such a confounded silly thing 's praying might be of some use: 's if a praying man needn't be quite a fool, after all: but—guess them duds are dry 'nough. I'll slide into 'em and go home sober. Wonder what Mrs. F. will think: though Bess 'll tell her."

"I thought Hol 'd be back to bounce me:" he said, after a minute. "I shall hear from him later."

"Promise me one thing, Fletcher."

"I'm mighty chary o' promises. A promise is worse 'n a hook in the gills."

"Promise me to come over to my mother's Gospel meeting at Union Hall, to-morrow at three o'clock."

"Fletcher had one arm in the sleeve of his damp coat, and was struggling with the other; but he stopped, and stood; his arm drawn behind him, his body bent forward, and looked up at John Mark with such surprise and scorn as he had never before encountered. He speered him with contempt, as he glared up at him under his eye-brows; then jerking his coat on, he exclaimed:

"Well: you are a curiosity, to say the least. I

don't believe it will be safe to let you try again : no knowing what you might do to me. Tell Ellenwood I'll come and start her up on Monday, unless he sends me word to keep out. Good night. Much obliged, Jack."

He went out. John Mark turned back to the furnace, saying to himself,

"He's a hard case: I'm glad I never was an infidel."

CHAPTER XIX.

MAURICE FLETCHER was not as indifferent as he appeared. His sensibilities had received a shock. He had an unusual share of professional pride, and to stand convicted by the logic of facts of such a crime, with its penalty hanging over him; and to have been compelled to recognize and appreciate John Mark Weldon's kindness, and be beholden to him for such a favor, were all things which touched him "in the place where he lived."

He could endure Bessie's domineering, because it was simply the reflection of himself. She grew more and more like him, even to his unbelief. She had no more reverence for sacred things than he had, and therefore none for him as her father. Effect followed cause always, even in his home, which seemed to have set law and order at defiance, and to have gone beyond its pale. He would not have acknowledged it, but it was of interest to him to know what she would do next. He often thought that if she had but been the boy of his family, he should have been perfectly content. The contempt she had for him, had a spice in it which angered him, of course, but which added somewhat of zest to his life. He felt very much as though he were being

called to account by himself, when she sat in judgment upon him. She was simply expressing outwardly the thoughts that he would not express for the world. He sometimes amused and comforted himself by laying plans by which he might bring her down, humble her, and make her dependent on him. She was a gamy creature; he would enjoy seeing her made to eat a few of her peppery retorts. Much as a hunter might lie in wait for an antelope, had Maurice Fletcher regarded Bessie as she had been growing up before him: only that she was his, however much she might queen it over him, sting and cut, with the edge of her sarcasm, she was his: all she was, all she said, his. Her sharpness was his; she was a kind of a boomerang to him, but his boomerang. So his pride sustained him when she chastised him; provided a balsam for the stings of her scorn. But this which had come upon him, this was different.

He turned away from the factory door after closing it behind him, with the feeling that he was shutting himself out from the only thing that gave any character to his life. He was not a success as a husband, or father, or friend, or citizen; but as an engineer, he ranked any man in Clifton. But now he was going out, away; the door shut behind him, because he had slept at his post. A soldier that slept at his post! And not only that, but the sleep was that drunken stupor for which there could be no excuse. Disgraced in the presence of the creature he had tended so many years, like an officer court-martialled in the presence of his servant. How he

had controlled her movements! And through her the movements of every band, and wheel, and lever in the establishment. He had said to them all, go, and they went; stop, and they stopped. Now they would go, the great wheel, and little wheels, piston, and lever, would go or stop independent of him. He should not even be allowed to go in and start her up on Monday. She was dead to him, and he to her. The thought struck him like a blow. He stopped, turned back, and stood in the shadow of the building, looking at the door which shut him out. Would some other hand polish her brass, trim her belts, oil her journal, time the tread of her walking beam? This he could not bear. To be an engineer had been the one dream of his boyhood. In his struggle to realize it, he had lost everything. He had an idolatrous love for his engine: the love born of sacrifice. For her sake he had been willing to hold his appetite in check always, as not for wife or child; but now he was disgraced and separated from her forever.

He was still standing in this contemplation, when John Mark came out to go home.

"Hello!" was his greeting, in a tone of surprise, as he swung around face to face with Fletcher, and gave him a searching look.

"Hel-l-o-o!"

"Fletcher!"

"Well?"

"I wish I could—uh—you know," and he seized and wrung the listless hand.

"Well, you can't: nobody can." He swore a

wretched oath, and turned away toward Dem's. He had no well defined intention. As he came out, his first intention had been to go home; but now, with John Mark looking at him with that look of compassion and entreaty, he would not think of it, he would go toward Dem's anyhow.

"He'll go right on to destruction, unless something can be done;" thought John Mark, as he looked after him a moment, and then went in quest of Hollis.

Hollis had been carefully keeping out of the way, and thus gaining time. He had a double purpose in this. That Fletcher might be getting sober, and that he, by taking him when John Mark had to let him go, might keep him away from the saloon yet longer. He had been on the outlook, and calculating chances. He at first wanted to have a word with John Mark alone, before he should take Fletcher in hand; but as he thought more about it, he concluded to let John alone, and come directly to Fletcher, as the only one involved. So it happened that as John Mark ascended to the office floor to find him, Hollis was going down the front steps with Fletcher in sight, to overtake him.

He walked rapidly, and coming to his side, slipped his arm through his. Fletcher looked up, and drew back a little: then settling to accept the situation, he jerked out a defiant:

"Well!"

"We have a little matter to talk over, Fletcher."

"No, we haint: there's no need o' talk; you know all about it, and you've got just one thing to do; do it, and be done with it."

"What's that?"

"Why, report me, and get me the grand bounce, of course."

"I don't know from anything I've heard yet, what to report, and—"

"Now you quit your lyin'; you know all about it. You know I've been drunk, and left that creature to do as she would, only that John Mark was there and kept her steady; but that wasn't me, and of course you can't have an engineer that does that sort o' thing."

"Of course!" said Hollis. "But I wasn't there but a minute; when I first went in I could see that something was wrong between you and the girl, but I have not had a word with any one. Honestly, I did not know you had been clear off, as you intimate. I must have the facts before I can understand well enough to know what to report, or how to act. Of course, if these things are so, we must inquire into it. I must, for the sake of John Mark, and all concerned. The street is no place; come with me into my quarters, we shall be entirely alone, just here but a step."

"What's the use? You know it now, anyhow; you'll have only one thing to do in the end."

"There is use; whatever is done must be done right. Right to you, and all the rest."

Hollis led the way, Maurice following to the door reluctantly; then with a sudden—

"I will not! Bounce me and done with it:" he jerked away, and started off at a rapid pace.

Hollis was nonplussed. He could not say to him,

"If you will stop and listen to me, some conclusion may be reached which shall make it possible for you to keep your position. I do not intend to bounce you, or report you, but to save you."

This was all true, and yet could not be spoken now to him. And the purpose seemed cut off by the perverse defiance of the miserable man, before it could ripen into action.

As for Fletcher, in the world which he had made for himself, added to the demoralizing influences which hedged him about, there was the imperative demand for drink, which now had full possession of him, and made him reckless. He had no time to sit down and talk, or hear any one else. To go up into Ellenwood's room meant detention; that meant thirst, the very agony of desire ungratified; time lost, and nothing gained. There could be no gain to him now; all was lost, anyhow. He had suddenly come to the place whence he must drop to disgrace and ruin, and his very pride compelled him to spurn any offer of a ladder to go down by. He would plunge out of sight at once. He looked back from the corner, and saw Hollis standing where he had left him. This made him angry, while it fed his pride. He threw him a menacing gesture, and strode forward. He had a feeling of exultation, as he thought that he had left both John Mark and Hollis looking so anxiously after him.

"Let them fret;" he muttered. "It's good enough for 'em."

With every heart-beat, his blood seemed to rise higher, and hotter: his thirst burned, his brain

whirled. He rushed into Dem's. He was greeted at the threshold with a shout of wild laughter, and profane comments on his appearance, which was certainly peculiar. Dem had been looking for him, and wondering as to the manner in which he would come. He met him, extending his hand, while he joined in the laugh at his expense.

"What's up, Morry?" he asked. "You look 's if you'd been done up for good."

"Gimme a whiskey straight:" said Fletcher, going to the bar.

"All right:" with a wink at the bartender; "but you're starting in rather heavy, aint you, old fellow? What is the matter? You look like a last year's sunflower:" and he gave his coat a jerk.

"O, make it a primrose, and be done with it:" said Fletcher. He seized the glass that was filled for him, and spreading his left hand over the region of his stomach, drained it at a gulp.

The loungers winked at each other, and a rough guffaw went around.

"You don't seem very chirk to-night, Morry," again said Dem, whose suspicions were fully aroused. "You look 's if you'd been blown out too long, and was just ready to go to seed. Did the old lady slip her tether, and get away from you to-day?"

Dem would not have been much surprised to have heard the boom of an explosion at the factory, any time since noon, from what he saw of Fletcher in the morning. Fletcher fired at this allusion, in a way that still further confirmed Dem's suspicions, as he fiercely demanded:

"What's that you say? No, sir, she didn't; she walked her beam as steady 's a teetotler, and," he added, with cunning forethought, patting his pocket, "she's a good old lady to tend to biz, and cash over on time; never failed me all these fifteen years. Gimme another drink."

"Certainly, Morry, all right; but you'd be welcome cash or no cash; that wouldn't make any dif'tween friends, you know."

"I've a good mind to try you on sometime," said Fletcher, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "Sometime you'll see me put my money in the bank, or give it to Mad'line, and run this place on my cheek; just to give you a chance to prove your friendship,—ha! ha! Here, fill her up again;" and he slid the glass across the bar. The bartender looked at Dem; he nodded slowly; the glass was filled again and drained. "Guess I wont go home to fix up to-night," said Fletcher, sauntering toward the gaming-room. "I'm awfully tired: one feels it down in that hole, such a moderate day 's this, with those fires going like blazes. No witticism intended; solemn fact, every word."

He threw himself in his accustomed seat, and began to watch a game.

Dem stood and eyed him for a while; then going back to the saloon, he said to the bartender:

"Something's up with Fletcher, sure 's pop. He's trying to come the blind over me: I don't b'lieve he's got a red cent. I b'lieve he's been bounced: and 'f that is so, I'm done with him, 'lest he drops the chink for every drink,—'s been on the merchants'

black list f'r weeks : an' we must look out. I'll tend t' him myself for a while, t'll I find out."

, ' Ye'r a sharp 'un, Dem," observed the bartender, admiringly. " Ye read a man right through."

" 'Ts my biz , don't any man come a fool game on me, and don't you forget it. I'll know how things are in there inside a half hour, and act accordin'. I haint no time to fiddle to an empty pocket."

Dem went back and sighted his game. He signalled an accomplice, who accordingly managed so that Fletcher was called to take a hand in a game.

" I'm not ready to begin yet," he said, doggedly, " got the headache."

The fact was that he intuitively, and also from years of observation on other men, understood the state of affairs toward him. The signals were read by him, and understood perfectly, as he looked about under his eyebrows. He felt that this was but another step down. The hounds were on the track of his empty wallet. He, however, determined to " lie dark," as long as possible. One strange thing happened in his mental process just at this juncture ; he seemed to see Bessie buying a load of good things for the family, with the money she had gotten from him by Hollis' interposition, and for a moment he was glad. Only for a moment, however. As he thought of it, he became rigid with anger, and an intense hatred of Hollis, for his part in the matter, took possession of him. He fell to brooding over this, wishing he could concert some scheme by which he could bring Hollis down, as well as humble Bessie.

He was dwelling on this, when he was challenged for a game.

"You're a queer Fletcher!" laughed Dem. "I don't know you; but, of course, every gentleman does as he likes here, so long as he behaves."

"Of course he does," sneered Fletcher, and relapsed into his silent watching and thinking. He was left undisturbed a few moments: knowing in himself that it was but for a few moments. Dem had withdrawn, but returned in a little while; the embodiment of the "gentlemanly proprietor," with a party in tow.

"Are you going to use this seat, Mr. Fletcher?"

The tone and manner were intensely civil, but with a pungent quality that sent a chill through Fletcher's marrow. He had heard that tone before, and laughed at it, but it had never been fired at him before. He knew all that followed in its wake, to any man with a month's score on the books, and no money in his pocket, and too demoralized to change his work clothes for his holiday suit. He had never come into this gentleman's resort in his engineer's outfit before; he had never before faced an unpaid bill: promptness had been his virtue (Dem was known to be a wonderful aid to promptness), but all this did not help him now. The first time was also the last time here. He cursed his stupidity in signing away his month's wages,—and again breathed vengeance on Hollis.

He answered Dem by sullenly vacating the place. A drink? His unpaid score was a challenge, when he thought of that: but he would get all he could.

He must come to the last soon ; he might as well see how far he could go, without turning his pocket inside out. He went up to the bar. Dem was there before him, rubbing his hands and smiling blandly. Fletcher looked him in the eye, and quailed. Dem read the signal of distress, and answered with a blank.

" Gimme one more drink, Dem : I've been sick all day, and left 'thout going to the paymaster : so I haint any money 'bout me : but you know I'm good fo't."

" Don't lie, Fletcher, whatever you do : " said Dem, whose license called for a man of good moral character, and who was bound to get to the truth.

" You drew your pay or was paid off somehow : and—" feeling out over possibilities or probabilities, " and your wife had to have it this time." Fletcher was beaten : and showed the fact plainly.

" No use in lyin' to me, my friend : honesty's the best policy, you know."

" Well. fact is, my girl wanted a new dress. and came down and coaxed it out o' me ; I was a fool, a generous fool, ha ! ha ! but I let her have every red cent."

" You knew you owed me a month's score."

" That's a fact, Dem ; but you see one can't tell such things to the women : and Bess would have it. I'll not forget next month, you may bet your life, I wont : I'll pay up every cent."

" You are lyin' yet," said Dem, sternly. " You wont have a cent next month. You know you wont, unless you strike another job : can't fool me."

"Wh—who told you?" stammered Fletcher.

"Never mind who told me," said Dem, chuckling at his success in getting at the bottom facts. "I know it, that's enough. I know all about you; you're on the merchants' black list; your family all down 't the heel; you're been hanging by the hooks this long time; you've been drunk all day to day; risked the factory, and they've found it out; and you're not wanted: who'd want a drunken engineer?"

Fletcher stood in a daze; Dem watched him with a cunning smile. After a moment he poured out a glass of cheapest stuff, poison, every drop of it, and pushing it slowly toward him, said:

"I don't want to be hard on you, Morry; of course your account must be squared before it gets any larger, but I'll treat you in token of our long friendship. I'll always give a thirsty man one drink, for humanity's sake."

Fletcher was not yet so insensible that he did not recognize the gross hypocrisy of this; but he was too much benumbed to resent anything. He took the proffered glass, although he knew the deadly compound it contained, and drained it without stopping to draw breath.

He set the glass back upon the bar, and turning, looked around the place. There were the old nooks and corners, chairs and tables; the old chums were having the same old times in the room beyond; but he knew that it was useless to think of lingering. His place had already been passed to his successor, just as he had taken the place of the last man before him, whose money and credit were gone. He was

being laughed at, just as he had laughed at others. He recalled one fellow who supposed that of course this rule of "no bills allowed to run," "no hangers on allowed to hang up here," might and would be suspended in his case; and the game they made of him. He would be nobody's game. He had been surprised by the enemy, but he was soldier enough to retreat in good order. So after just enough hesitation in his going, to feed the wicked fire of Dem's eyes for an instant, he turned and went out into the street.

Intoxicated men were not new to the streets of Clifton, but it was new to see this man in this condition. He was not familiar to the public eye. He frequented but few places. Daily to and from the factory and his home; weekly to Dem's, where he shut himself in for the Sabbath's sport, and to a few other places, where he went for his daily drinks, he was regularly seen by a few; but to-night he was in a way to impress himself on the multitudes, who surged up and down. He required more room on the sidewalk than could be afforded him, and so became conspicuous. He seemed to have no purpose whatever, but staggered on in the human current, being beaten about in no friendly way, until the demand was again made for drink. He turned into the first saloon, a place which he had never visited before. He sauntered in with as natural an air as he could assume, up to the bar, and asked for brandy. The bartender had seen him before, and recognized him as Date's engineer, so the liquor was slowly poured, while he was "sized up," from the

present standpoint. It was concluded, after a rapid survey, that he had been "off" all day, was probably in trouble, but would be good for one drink any way. The bartender kept his hand near the glass, in the pay-as-you-go-sir, style. Fletcher put his thumb and finger in his vest pocket, reached out his other hand, and was permitted to take the glass. He seized it, threw the liquor down his throat, set the glass deliberately down, turned, and looked about, and then with a wink and a leer, drew his empty fingers from his pocket, snapped them, and sprang out.

"Here, you! Pay for that drink, you!" and the bartender sprang over the bar, and clapped his hand roughly on Fletcher's shoulder, just as he opened the door. He whirled out of his grasp to the street, literally rolling away from him. The knight of the white apron knew better than to carry his battle into the street, so throwing a volley of oaths after him, and calling out:

"I'll remember you, my fine fellow:" he retreated within. A loud laugh greeted him.

"He come it on you slick," shouted a voice, shaking with laughter.

"Well: he's the last one ever will, I'll have you know. I'll never let any man have another drink until I see the color of his cash."

"Not even me?" wheedled an old and constant customer, called Dick.

"No—not even you, or any man: one such trick 's 'nough."

"Let's go 'n thrash him," said Dick.

There was a rush for the door : Dick bounded into the street, but Fletcher was gone.

Maurice Fletcher had never before known the drink craze, but as he again staggered along with the crowds, he felt that everything in life worth having, was summed up in that one thing,—drink. Never before had he found himself unable to get all he wanted : but now he was in extremity. Time was, not long before, when he would have scorned such a trick as he had just played : but now he fell to studying the trick plan. He must have more drink : the fever was burning more and more fiercely : he looked about for a place in which to try again. The sign of a place known as “the Lamb’s Fold” was just before him. A notable place, which, however, he never frequented. It had not a savory reputation, even among drinking men. It was a resort of boot-blacks, newsboys and street-boys of the baser sort. Fletcher staggered in. The greed for drink was manifest in every feature of his face, and blinded him to everything about him.

“ Gimme a drink, quick ; whiskey : ” he demanded, before he reached the bar.

“ All right, sir : as much as you please, ” said the suave bartender, smiling upon him, and setting a bottle and glass on the bar.

Fletcher took hold of the glass, the bartender kept hold of the bottle.

“ Come, hurry up, ” he cried.

“ Certainly : ” still smiling and winking over to a crowd of youngsters who seemed to be ready to enjoy the scene immensely.

"Well then," he fairly screeched with oaths, "tip that bottle, or lemme : I'm dying for't. Ah," and he thrust his hand into his empty pocket. "You're waiting for your money, are you?—you !"

"Of course : that's a little preliminary that is necessary to the sort o' biz we do. Nobody ever gets in debt here : don't lay that burden on any man's soul in this place."

Fletcher dropped his hands, turned half around, and settled against the bar, with a groan.

The crowd of boys, augmented suddenly to a host, broke into a loud laugh, a regular boyish whoop. Fletcher threw an imprecation at them from over his shoulder, only to be greeted with more laughter.

"Want a drink bad, old man?" cried a piping voice from the crowd. "Here, I'll pay for 't," and a coin rang on the bar.

"All right, sir : that's what I call generous ; you're a born philanthropist," said the bartender, and the boys cheered.

Fletcher turned eagerly ; every sense of his body seemed enslaved by the drink despair that was upon him ; he seemed to see nothing but the flash of the yellow liquor in the glass : he heard nothing but the music of its death gurgle ; as it jerked its serpentine length out of the bottle's throat. The pungent odor watered his lips and eyes. He seized the glass, and drained it, and with a long-drawn gasp of relief, turned for the first time toward his "benefactor." A stunted, boyish figure, with an impish face, in which two round blue eyes glittered like steel, leered up into his. A look of blank surprise, then of

amazement and consternation, caused a fresh burst of merriment from the impish face, and its associates that clustered closely about him.

"Well, pap! Look like ye never seed me b'fore," chuckled the little fellow. "Aint ye glad ye's got a son to care for ye in yer old age, eh? Hi! hi! Boys, aint this fun?"

"Hi!" "hi!" "hi!" "hi!" was answered in chorus.

"Come, old chap! Ye aint struck dumb, are ye? Ye don't seem very grateful. Mebbe another glass 'll grease his tongue, so he kin speak. Pour it out, boss, here's the chink," and the boy threw another nickle on the bar. "Guess I kin afford two drinks, to make my pap happy."

Fletcher was so astonished that for the moment he did not crave the one more glass. His own boy, Harley! This was something for which he was wholly unprepared.

"You—you—you here?" he stammered.

"Look's like me, don't it? Mighty good thing f'r ye 't I was here, wasn't it? What ud ye don f'r a drink, 'f I hadn't bin?"

"You—you—you didn't pay for 't!"

"Who did, 'f I didn't? Did 'you, Jim? d' ye, Llewellyn? d' you? d' you?" swinging his fist into the faces of the several boys. "Not one o' ye. I stood treat f'r the crowd, my old pap to boot, didn't I, boss?"

"Guess you did; you're a mighty generous fellow, you are," replied the laughing bartender.

"Wh—where d' ye get the money?"

"O that," laughed Harley, "that's nothing t' get."

"Nothing to get, you young rascal," and Maurice Fletcher attempted to take him by the shoulder. "What d' you mean? how d' you get it? You must 'a stole it!"

The boy slipped out of his hand and gyrated away from him.

"Here, H-a-r-l-e-y Fletcher, you give that money to me, an' tell me where you got it. Bess didn't give it to you. D' you steal it from her? My hard earnings that mother and Bess needed, you young villain!"

Harley had opened a door to an inner room, and followed by the boys, yelling like cats, barking like dogs, ba-a-ing like calves, had gone inside and shut the door. He started to follow, but the quick-witted bartender rapped on the glass left standing untouched, and said:

"Here's your drink, sir; paid for, you know, sir, spoiling for somebody to drink it; here, I'll fix it up a little for you."

Fletcher turned, looked at the glass, and putting his hand around it, as the bartender proceeded to "doctor" it, stood absorbed, seeming to forget everything else in its contemplation.

After drinking it, however, he turned again toward the door, through which the boys had passed.

"What do you want?" asked the bartender, leaping over the bar and coming toward him.

"My boy: he's no business with money: he's no business here: I'll teach him!" and he gave the door handle a savage twist.

It opened and revealed a deserted billiard-room, with sundry small tables scattered about. It was a large room with windows, commanding by day a view of a vacant lot surrounded by a high board fence, outwardly a bulletin board, with a lumber yard just beyond; but now all was black outside, without a glimmer of even a street lamp anywhere. Fletcher stood a second looking into the vacant room. He investigated the window outlook, then turning fiercely toward the bartender:

"Here, you," he cried, "you find that young scoundrel quick!"

"Find him yourself, if you want him; what have I to do 'bout finding him?"

"Well then, I'll have a cop here 'n no time."

"Just 's you like 'bout that: but you better be cool. You haint a straw 'gainst us here, 'n you know it—don't make a fool o' yourself. You ought to be mighty proud o' a boy, that turns up jest in the nick o' time, with a pocket full o' money, here; it's my treat this time: have a drink?"

Fletcher muttered, and looked furious, but came up, balancing himself carefully; grasped the edge of the bar, and stood holding on while he took the glass, that had been made up with prudent foresight, by the fellow who did not care to have the eye of the public turned upon him.

Fletcher set the glass down, and lurching heavily, like a vessel in a heavy sea, sought the harbor of an arm-chair near by: and while the bartender watched with a wicked glare in his eyes, he dropped off into a heavy stupor.

When Maurice Fletcher was settled in the stupor produced by the drug, it was but a small matter to tip him over on a truck and trundle him like baggage to the alley and dump him like a load of offal, to get sober or die, as the chance might be.

CHAPTER XX.

HARLEY FLETCHER had wondered all day how matters would come out between Bessie and the father, so he kept watch of her movements. He saw her go to the factory, and come out; and go to the grocery, and come out with her arms full of parcels; then he joined her.

“Say, Bess,” he cried, “bully for you!”

“Hello, Harley,” she answered gayly, “take some of these bundles, and we’ll have a jolly supper.”

He took the bundles. He was a good-natured fellow, if he was idle and vicious. He was the very best he knew how to be; so he was ready to relieve Bessie of the larger portion of her load.

“I say, Bess, you’re a regular chunk, you are; got that money, didn’t you?”

“I guess I did.”

“All of it?”

“Every cent; he never saw it, and he never will.”

“How much?”

“O, a big pile: a whole hundred.”

“Dollars?”

“Yes: what’d you suppose? Of course: that’s

what he gets every month : and aint it a shame that we have to live 's we do ? Why, Harley, you might go to college just 's well 's not."

"Don't want to go to college ; 'twould be awful dull : but say, what're you going to do with all that money ? "

"Do ? I'm going to get things to make mother well, and things to eat, and pay part of the rent. If I can only get it all next month, somehow : but—I—doubt. I shall save this carefully."

"Lemme have some, Bess ? "

"You ? " and she laughed. "What on earth do you want of it ? "

"O, for fun."

"Fun ? You'll get your share of the fun of having something fit to eat once more. This must be taken care of. 'Tis too bad, though, that you can't have money for tops, and marbles, and balls, like other boys. But, I tell you, Harley, sometime I'll have money, and you shall have some then, so shall the girls."

"When, Bess ? " And Harley looked up with open eyes.

"O—don't know just when : but sometime, when I'm married, and—"

"Married ! O, jolly, Bess ! When ? Who ? " and he danced around before her.

"Just you wait and see ; but—"

"Say, Bess, 'taint Henry Griffin ? " and the boy stepped in her way.

"Get along ! and don't be foolish, Harley," but she blushed rosily.

“Cos if ’tis, he a bad un ; and I heard him—”

“Stop, Harley Fletcher ! You good-for-nothing imp ! You shan’t talk that way.”

“You’re bad’s Annie was,” laughed the boy, with the quickness of a street Arab. “O you needn’t rave ! I know all about it, and it’s the same game over again.”

“I won’t give you a mouthful of supper to-night,” cried Bessie, her tone husky with anger.

“Don’t care : I’ll steal it then.”

“All right, you can. Give me those bundles, you little Arab.”

She made a grab at them, and Harley jumped away, and ran, dropping, however, all the smaller parcels, which had been laid lightly on a larger one, containing bread. She gathered them up, calling, meanwhile, angrily for the bread, with which he was running away.

“What’s the matter, Bessie ?”

It was kind Robert Sloan, who turned a corner in time to hear her outcry.

“O, nothing,” replied proud Bessie.

“Nothing ? Do you go along the street acting this way for nothing ? I know you too well : crying ? You don’t cry often : what’s up now ?”

“When I said nothing, I meant nothing to nobody but me.”

“O, that’s it, is it ? Yet, I rather guess ’tis something to me, when you go ’long picking up bundles in the street, crying, and yelling like that. I’m not a stranger, Bessie, child, to be knocked over because I ask what’s the matter.”

"Mr. Sloan, there aint nobody on earth has any right to come asking such things. Sometimes I have to go to folks, and tell 'thout asking: that's bad 'nough: maybe I'll have to come t' you some time: but I'll never tell anybody 'till I have to."

"Your pride 'll bring you trouble, I'm afraid, child: but if you have to go to anybody, come to me, Robert Sloan, will you?"

"Yes, I will: if you won't pry 'round and ask questions."

"I won't," and he laughed. "I'll tend to my own affairs: 's that it?"

"Yes."

"I sort o' feel, though, that you are a part o' my affairs this minute, Bess; but I'll not ask anything more 'bout it: I'll look for you, though, one o' these days."

He went on, saying to himself:

"Janet's right: something's got to be done, and I guess it's my turn to be looking into it."

From this time he determined to watch her movements, and began that very night.

It was unusual for Bessie to be seen in this plight by anybody. But she was tired, and the excitement of the day had been intense; and to have Harley run off with the precious loaves of fresh white bread, such bread as had not come into their house for many a day, was too much to bear. Tears always angered her, even when alone she could not abide them: and this encounter with Mr. Sloan, dried them quickly.

"I'll just have to go and get more, that's all," she

said, as she went on. "And I'll take it out of his allowance."

This thought cheered her. She went briskly on, stopped at a bakery, and replenished her store, and by the time she got home was in good spirits.

"I've got it, mamma!" she cried from the kitchen, where she dropped the parcels from her aching arms. "And," coming on into the room, "I bought lots o' goodies."

"Did you really succeed, darling?" said Madeline, reaching out her arms.

"Every cent; he never even saw it. A whole hundred dollars: I'll tell you all about it by'n-by. I spent some, of course, and I'm going to pay some rent: but here's seventy dollars to put in the bank, under you, you'll have to be the banker. Here, I'll tuck it under the mattress: now, don't you feel rich?"

"O, 'twill be good to have some money once more, and nice things on the table for you and the children to eat," her voice broke into a hysterical cry.

"You dear little mother!" crooned Bessie, bending over and caressing her with her chin; "and for you too: you're going to have something nice, first of all."

"I don't feel like eating: but I shall enjoy seeing the children, poor things! and you, dear; what should we do without you? And I have wanted you to have enough to eat, and—to—wear, dear child: but papa does intend to do right, dear: I hope you were nice to him."

"O, mother!" began Bessie, a little sternly, but

ended by kissing her, adding : " As nice as I could be ; but you really don't expect me to be very sweet to him, do you ? "

" I'll tell you, darling, what I expect of you : I expect you to remember he's your father, and to be nice to him for my sake. He was my lover once, dear : and—don't—ever be impertinent to him, darling : it hurts me—so."

" Hurt you ? Dear little mother, I wouldn't do that : I'd let him grind me under his heel first."

" He wouldn't do that, child. He has his way, and he's—"

Bessie stopped the words with kisses, and then getting up hastily, said :

" I must get about your supper, now : get your mouth ready for something nice. I'll surprise you, and tempt you once, see 'f I don't."

Madeline smiled tearfully, looking after Bessie, as she went out into the kitchen. The girl thrust the balance of the money into her bosom, and went about making good her promise of supper. She had invested ten cents in oysters, which she made into a delicate little stew. She opened a small pot of jelly, from which she took a spoonful, then covered carefully and set away in the top of the cupboard. These, with some nice toast and crackers, she took in to her mother ; laying it out on a clean piece of the light-brown wrapping paper, on the side of the bed.

" Now if this don't tempt you," she said, as she arranged the things with little housewifely airs ; " just look at that big fellow," and she lifted the largest oyster on the spoon. " Some of 'em are

rather small, but the soup is nice, and this jelly's a lovely color: and that toast is just as crisp. I thought you wouldn't want tea with the soup: but if you would—"

"No, dear, no: this is enough, and nice as can be: fit for the queen."

"I'd like to sit down here and see you eat, but I must get the supper. Have the girls been home yet?"

"June came in a minute, but went off with a queer looking girl."

Bessie heaved a little sigh: she did wish the larger girls would help her a little, but would not say so to the mother. She had come to expect nothing from any one. She was like a little tug plowing the rough sea, with a great rotten hulk in tow.

Susie and Sadie she tried her best to train, and cover like a good mother hen, but the older girls and Harley she left to do as they chose. They had been known to be out all night, and what else Bessie did not pretend to know. Bessie's sensibilities were blunted, and living in with her mother as she had, she was too ignorant as yet to realize the awful life of the street for the children, and yet she knew and felt enough to make her anxious and troubled, when she stopped to think: and because she could not help it by thinking, she would not do it. She had almost dismissed these sisters from her thought. She cooked for them, when she had anything to cook, talked to them when they were about, but left them to go out and in, sleep and waken, as they chose.

The little girls came in as she was getting supper on the table, and stood with eager faces, sniffing and picking about.

"Go wash you, girls," she said, "we've got such a nice supper, you want to look nice."

But instead they fell to quarrelling over the remnants of the mother's supper, which Bessie had brought out and left on the table. Bessie thought the best way to have peace, was to give them their supper without anything further, and get them off to bed.

The children were pacified with full plates, and in the quiet that ensued, and the comforting fact that there was money and food, Madeline was able to turn over in her bed and sleep. Bessie closed the door softly, ate her supper, cleared the things away, leaving food for the rest, if they should come, covered on the table, put the little ones to bed, got herself ready, and with the money for the rent in her hand, sallied forth.

She was going to Mr. Griffin's house to pay him in person. She felt that she had almost a daughter's right to approach this man. That he should be angry at her father, and grumble at them all because he was kept out of his rent, she considered perfectly natural and right. She was in full sympathy with him in the matter, and she had especial pride in taking this money to him. She wondered if he knew that his Henry was her Henry too: probably not. Such was the effect of her love upon her judgment, that she attributed to the father of her lover, qualities which belonged to the better ideal, instead of the

reality, which she knew in her own father. So she was sure when he did know about it, he would be kind to her and love her, and she should know what it was to have a father at last. Because of this supposed relation between Mr. George Griffin and her, she was determined to pay that rent if possible. She would have gone without food if she could, that she might free herself and her family from all obligations to the father of her Henry. This twenty dollars was the best she dare attempt now; bread money must be kept, at all events. As she went along the streets, in spite of all that was discouraging in her life; in spite of her thin dress, fashioned by her own hands, in spite of all that some very good people said about her, she was happy. Sweet thoughts kept her company. Love is just as sweet at fourteen, and sometimes sweeter than ever again; and Bessie was fourteen, and in love. She was also on the way, for the first time, to the house of her beloved: on business of course: but that, neither the nature of it, need interfere with her enjoyment of pleasant thoughts by the way. She might possibly see Henry's mother or sisters; they would probably open the door for her when she rang the bell. Ellen Griffin did open the door: Bessie inquired for Mr. Griffin.

"What name, please?" asked the young lady, as she held the door open for her to enter.

"Bessie Fletcher," she answered, wondering if the name would be entirely new.

It was not: Ellen Griffin had heard it, and its odor was unsavory to her. She drew herself up

proudly, her cheek flushed with indignation, and opening the door widely, she said :

“You cannot see Mr. Griffin; you cannot enter, you bad girl! I should think you would be ashamed to come here.”

Bessie stood transfixed. Her eyes dilated, her cheeks grew white, then crimson; but she did not move or speak.

“Go away!” said Ellen, holding the door still open.

Bessie took a step forward instead of back to the door, and as she did so, seemed to get strength to speak.

“There’s no reason,” she said. “I’ve a right to come: I had business. I shall see Mr. Griffin.”

“You shall not come in. I will call the man to put you out.”

“No: he should not touch me: but—” and Bessie turned proudly, “I can wait. I can see him somewhere else: I will go.”

She walked out, her head up, her nostrils dilating, her throat palpitating, and her hands folded at her belt.

What did this mean? A bad girl? She knew better: everybody knew better, who knew anything. And this was his home, and his sister. Bessie knew it was his sister from the eyes and chin. She would not be welcome, then. It was all of her father: because he was a bad man, she was a bad girl. That, then, was the family name: not the Fletcher girl any more, but the Bad girl, because Fletcher had been changed to Bad. She smiled scornfully at the con-

ceit, walking on, her head still up, set on her rigid neck as if it were immovable. She had hardly moved a muscle not required in walking.

She had come to the corner where she would turn to go home, when she suddenly felt herself seized from behind, and a voice said :

“ Bess, are you deaf and blind, both ? ”

“ O, Henry ! ” she cried, at the first sound of the familiar tone, “ have you come to me in my trouble ? ”

“ Trouble ? Are you in trouble ? ”

“ Don’t you know ? No, of course not. Weil— ” and she told him the story as they walked slowly on, adding, “ so you see I’m Bessie Bad, now : Miss Bessie Bad, at your service. ”

“ You don’t mind that, do you ? ”

“ Mind it ? Of course I mind. ”

“ You couldn’t have been much surprised. I wonder you went there, anyway. If you don’t want to get such things keep to your own place. What did you expect ? ”

“ Expect ? I expect to be treated well, of course. I was surprised. I went on business with your father ; you know, the house we rent of him, and— ”

“ O, as to that, I didn’t know : I don’t pay any attention to such things. But you needn’t mind these things, Bessie, dear, they are to be expected ; but, you may as well know that your name is Miss Bad all over town, and so, you see, you may just as well stop caring. Fact is, I like you better for being Miss Bad, just a little bit wicked, you know : too much goodness would spoil you. And say, I’ve

been thinking for a good while that you'd feel better in a new dress. A good, nice dress, made in style by somebody that knows how. The Bads, as a family, don't look well in poor clothes—why, Bess, what are you glowering at?"

She had jerked her arm away from him, and drawn herself up, and her eyes blazed: but she walked on by his side.

"Come," he continued, "here's a place—get you something tasty: like that in the shop window. Here's money—of course as it's for me, I pay the bill. I'll walk up and down: you go in and choose. —Whatever do you mean, Bess?"

She went striding on before him, tall, straight, proudly rigid; twitching the scant skirt of her cheap dress, with a little spiteful jerk with every step: on, past the brilliant store, without ever looking at the window, with its gay show of dainty fabric, on to where a street lamp lighted a lonely corner, and here she stopped, and turned and confronted Henry Griffin. He had followed her, wondering.

The light of the lamp was full in her face, and he was awed before it.

"Why, Bess!" he faltered, "I—I—only offered you—a—a little gift—for friendship. What'd I say to make you like that?"

"I don't know what you said: but I know what you meant: I've been a fool. I don't know much: I—I—I thought you—you were honest. I've learned a few things lately, that makes me understand all this. You—you could like me to be wicked: like me better for it: like to have me called Bad by every-

body, so—so —for what? I'd like to know. I can't see through it all: but I can see enough. You—you don't love me, Henry Griffin; or—you could not offer me that money, and want me Bad. O, I thought—you were a man: but—you—you're a caterpillar. I hate caterpillars—I used to burn 'em: get away out o' my sight, or I shall scream."

Poor Bessie's heart was overcharged, filled to bursting; but her cup of shame and sorrow was not yet full. She had found out that it was a bitter thing to be the child of vice: but she had yet more to learn.

Henry Griffin would have stood his ground, and followed Bessie home, if he dared. He had never seen this side of her nature: she had been to him a sweet, vivacious, winsome girl, and he had been assured by those who professed to know, that she would give herself to him in his own way, with nothing more than a show of maidenly coyness. He had been emboldened to make these advances at this time, by her evident discouragement. That she should so strenuously resent his offered gift, was to him a revelation of her nature of which he had not dreamed. If he did not wish to make a scene here, it was evident he must leave her, as she said.

He would not abandon his purpose: but he would retreat, in condition to renew the attack. So he said:

"Bessie, for some strange reason you do not understand me. I intended no offence: pardon me if I took unwarrantable liberty in asking you to buy a dress at my expense: I know you have a hard time, and—"

“ You think I will take pity, and dresses, and—this. I’ll wear what I earn by honest work. I earn more than I get every day, but you are not the one to make up the balance. I tell you I see through you, and you’d better not come near me again. I thought I loved you : but I guess I was mistaken : so we are done.”

She swept past him, drawing her thin skirts away from him, and walked rapidly back toward home.

Suddenly she thought of the money which she had taken, and carried in her hand. In the surprises of the hour, she had forgotten it, and it was gone. The discovery shocked her a little, but not much. She was suffering too deeply to feel anything keenly. She had a vague consciousness of the value of that money to them all, but it was gone ; and she could not help it now. Yes : she could go back and look : she might find it : she had better do that. So again she turned, and with her eyes bent on the sidewalk, retraced her steps slowly, carefully. The money was in bills, two tens, made into a little round roll such as could be hidden in her hand. She went the entire distance back to the house of George Griffin : but the search was fruitless. She stood before the door a moment, weighing the question whether she should brave again the scorn of the young lady, for the sake of asking to look on the hall floor for her money, but she could not ; the money was not worth it : she would go without food enough, to balance it.

She turned again to take the homeward route : when looking up she saw the eyes of Henry Griffin regarding her from the corner of the house, but a few

feet away. A sudden fear crept through her; she stood still a moment looking straight before her, when the vision of Robert Sloan arose on her horizon, coming along the street toward her.

His appearance was not accidental. He had been all the evening in the employ of the "Home Protective agency." Had Bessie known this she might have rebelled even then; but as it was she made a quick spring toward him, and seizing his outstretched hand, she said,

"O, I'm so glad—go home with me, I'm afraid."

"Poor little Bess!" and he tucked her hand away in his mitten—threw a look at Henry that spoke volumes, and led her home.

"I'm glad you are afraid, Bessie," he observed once.

"I said I'd come to you, and I did," she answered.

He left her at the door. She tip-toed in, but was greeted by sobs from her mother's room.

"What in the world! Mother dear!" she cried: everything else forgotten at once.

"O—th' th' money—see if you can find it. Somebody came in; I was asleep; I felt the hand in the bed; there wasn't much light—is it there, dear?"

Bessie was rapidly passing her hand under the mattress; there seemed to be no place into which it could have slipped: but it was surely gone.

"I can't find it, mother; could anybody take it?"

"I was sure somebody did. O—I'm afraid it wasn't right to try to get it. O, what shall we do?"

Bessie had not a word to say, but her heart sank sick as death, as she remembered that she had lost

the rest of it, and they were worse than penniless,
As the girl went to her cot in the kitchen that night,
she said to herself, "If there is no God, there ought
to be, just such a God as Mrs. Graham told us about
when I went to her class"

CHAPTER XXI.

JOHN MARK joined Hollis Ellenwood, as he still stood looking after Fletcher that evening.

"Well:" said Hollis.

"I'd like to tell you about it now."

"All right; come up."

They went up into the pleasant room which Hollis occupied alone: and John Mark went over the incidents of the day: and then they consulted together; and finally, when John Mark arose to go home, Hollis put on his overcoat to go with him, that they might prolong their talk. The night was beautiful; not very cold; pleasant for walking. They walked out along the railroad track, over the scene of an incident in the life of Hollis, which was always of deep interest to them both. They talked it over; their arms laid over each other's shoulders, and walked on, until the city was behind them, and the lights of Annie's house, and Elmwood Farm, were just before.

"Come on and stay all night with me," said John Mark: "it's been a long time since you've been out to stay."

"That's so," said Hollis, "but I must not stay. I'll walk on, and just see the folks: it will do me good,"

"You haven't stayed over night, or spent a Sabbath since before Christmas ; since you got well, and went home ; do you know that, old fellow ? "

"Yes."

"Well, I'm just going to keep you, to-night."

"I cannot stay, John." Hollis drew back, and then stopped and stood still. "Don't know 's I better go on," he said, more to himself than John Mark.

John eyed him a second, then said :

"Now, see here : you've got to stop this nonsense. Don't you suppose I know what it's all about ? What in the world is the reason you don't just have this matter out with Annie, and understand it between you ? You're the dumbest fellow I ever saw about some things : now if it was me—"

"John Mark, if it was you, would you dare get married ? "

"Dare get married ? I'd be tempted to laugh if you didn't look so solemn. Why not, to be sure ? "

"Haven't you ever thought of this ? Is there no good reason why we should not marry ? "

"Not that I see : provided, of course, we can find the right girl, and she'll have us."

"Strange that no one seems to think and feel about this as I do. John, I'm afraid to do this : it looks like sacrilege to me, to take a pure, sweet woman, such a one as I should want—"

"Annie, for instance," broke in John, with a little ripple in his voice.

"Yes, Annie : to take her : to even ask her, to wish it, or even think about it, seems profane, after what I have been."

"What does she think about it?"

"I do not know; only—I think after all I do know; I think she agrees with me."

"Well, I know she does not."

Hollis looked up quickly at his friend, then dropped his eyes. John Mark watched and read as well as he could in the pale light, just before the coming of the late moon. After a moment he said:

"You'd better ask Annie what she thinks about it. I'd like to see this business fixed up. Of course, Annie isn't the angelic being to me, that you seem to see in her. She's my cousin, you know, and we've had many a rough and tumble together, when we were little things; and I've known her off and on ever since. She's got some notions of her own: I don't think you'd find that you'd got into heaven, just yet, if you married her; but on the whole, she's a pretty nice girl; almost good enough for you."

"John Mark, I don't like you to talk in this way about it. I don't think it's right. It's as holy as religion to me: a part of it, in fact, and you seem to belittle it."

"Forgive me, old boy, I wouldn't do that for anything. I've never been in love myself, only with you: that may account for it. But I am earnest in all I have said. I know that Annie admires you, and would love you, if you'd give her a chance."

"But just think of what she went through, John; and for me to think of—"

"That's just it: she needs you on that very account: she so restless, and—"

"But her work, John Mark: her house and girls—"

“ Bless your soul alive ! do you suppose Annie can be satisfied with that—she’s too thoroughly a woman. Her house, and the girls, with her money, would be as much more to her, and she as much more to them, if she had a husband and home and children of her own, from which to do this work. I don’t know much, Hol, of the things I ought to know ; and the wisdom I’m dropping now, isn’t all mine, only as I can see how wise it is. This is the general tenor of talk about the house. My mother sees that Annie isn’t contented. Only a day or two ago she said to father, that Annie must find a matron, and teachers, to take the house off her hands, or she would be getting morbid. Father said yes : and that it was because Annie was so truly a woman, so well balanced in her nature, that this life she has started into, is unnatural ; and so she, with her healthful nature, can’t live it. I’m giving his words almost. He said that she couldn’t live this kind of a life, and stay well and strong every way. They both agreed that Annie would lose her efficiency in this which she had supposed would be her life work, if there was not a change. My father is a pretty wise old man, you know : he said that if she had come out of that trouble heart-broken ; if she had been less strong, and practical, and more sentimental ; she would have made a better missionary, according to the ordinary idea, but not so good a woman. He thinks she is a queen. He believes in women, and wants every woman to blossom, as he calls it, and ripen, and go to seed. He thinks that’s her right : and he doesn’t look kindly on anything, from church work down, that takes her

out of this natural life. He says that my mother would never have been able to do the grand work she has done, if she had not had him, and me. Though what help I have ever been to her, I can't see for the life of me. Mother agrees with father in this: and they both think Annie ought to marry to preserve what she has begun, and make it possible for her to maintain herself in it. And they both said—I didn't intend to tell you all this when we began, but it's kept coming along, and it's all right;—they both say that Annie is more deeply interested in you than ever she realizes. Mother said she should not meddle with it. She should not drop a word, for you know she believes fully in the ability of God to attend to all such affairs for his people. I don't know what she would say, if she knew what I've been telling you. Maybe she'd think though, that I am doing the Lord's work. I'm sure I don't know how I came to do it, nothing was farther from my intention: I'm glad, anyhow, that it's said."

"So am I," said Hollis.

The two young men had remained standing just where Hollis stopped and drew back. John Mark had kept his arm over Hollis' shoulder: Hollis had leaned forward to listen to these strange, sweet words, which were like balsam to his soul; but yet he was not able to take these sayings as the end of controversy. If Annie Dayton should marry some man: if he, Hollis Ellenwood, had not so much in his memory that savored of death and hell: if he had but foreseen this, and had formed all his habits and thoughts, and made his record with

reference to a life, and home, and work with her; then he could take all the consolation of this message and be glad. But—and again this but pressed the wreath of thorns, which he had worn so long, into the brow of his soul, and he bowed in agony upon the shoulder of his friend.

"Come, Hollis, this is not like you—it is not like you," expostulated John, as he felt the strong frame quiver against him. "Come on to the house, and we'll talk and pray about it."

"No, John—I cannot—now. Just one thing settled, I would: I could go to Annie: but, it is not settled. I must wait; and I cannot bear the sight of her, or of dear Elmwood. Good night, John Mark, I think you have done me good to-night."

"A queer sort'o' good it must be to take hold of you like this. And I must say I'm disappointed in you. But yet I do believe in you: you'll do what's right, if the sky drops."

"Prove that to me, John Mark, beyond a doubt, and I shall be the happiest man alive."

"Wh—why—Hollis; are you afraid you wouldn't do right? Are you? What are you afraid of?"

Hollis wrung the hand John had thrust out, and turning quickly, walked away toward the city. He walked rapidly, taking short cuts straight toward his room. He was going in this way, with his head down, wrapped in thoughts, painfully sweet, when in turning a corner, he almost collided with a patrolman, who, aided by the driver, was trying to get a helpless thing, in the shape of a man, out to the

patrol wagon, which stood a few steps away. Hollis stopped, recognized the officers, and remarked :

“ Poor fellow, he must be chilled if he has been out long ; here—let me help.”

And laying his strength under the load, he had the satisfaction of knowing that the man was more gently handled than he might have been. He was laid over into the wagon, his face up.

“ Let’s see ’f we know him,” said the officer to the driver. “ Hand me my lantern there.”

Hollis was in the wagon ; the lantern’s light was turned upon the stolid face.

“ Why, it’s Fletcher !” he cried.

“ Fletcher—your engineer ?” asked the officer.

“ Yes : drive him around to my room. He’s chilled : he needs care ; I’ll see to him.”

“ Fortunate for him you came along just now,” said the officer.

“ I’m glad :” said Hollis ; “ let’s get him in quick.”

When Hollis had Maurice Fletcher in his own bed in one of his own night gowns, with good reason to believe that he would awaken by-and-by, with nothing especially serious as the result of his exposure, he was deeply grateful to God, who had, he fully believed, ordered all the steps taken that night to this end. Now he would have a chance to do something for this man. They would have the Sabbath before them, shut in together.

He wheeled the couch into position, where he could

guard the door, even if he should sleep heavily, and Fletcher should waken first. Then, as a further

precaution, he locked the soiled garments in a closet, and laid himself down to rest. Excessively weary, he fell asleep in spite of all Fletcher's heavy breathing, and all the thoughts that trooped through his brain. A dreamful sleep it was, but restful, after all. He awoke at his usual early hour. Fletcher was still sleeping, breathing more quietly ; he would probably awaken late. Hollis thought he would take another nap. He arose, turned the slats to the blinds so as to keep out the light, when the sun should rise ; lowered the window from the top, opened the drafts to the base burner, and settled himself for the other nap in which he had not often indulged of late. When he awoke, the sunlight was streaming in golden lances through the shutters, and the church bells were ringing. At first he was at a loss to account for the fact that he was on the lounge, so heavy had been his sleep. But in a moment he remembered, and looking up to the bed, saw Fletcher, still appearing to be asleep. But Hollis was sure his first glance gave him the impression that he was looking at him. However, be that as it might, he would not disturb him. He arose and made his toilet. He saw tokens that his guest had been up and about, probably trying to find his clothes and get away, and he concluded that now he was feigning sleep, until such time as he should be left alone, long enough to find some means of escape. Hollis took his meals a block away from his room, and knowing Fletcher as well as he did, he was sure that if he was left alone a moment he would slip away, even if he had to skulk along alleys in the bed gown to some saloon. Hence, he

determined he would not leave him. He must have this day's God-given opportunity with this man. Looking from the window facing the street, he saw an idle boy: throwing up the sash, he signalled him; and by this means was able to send an order which would insure the comfort of the inner man for the day. Fletcher seemed to sleep still as the morning passed, but Hollis had the feeling all the time that he was the object of a close and critical inspection. And he was right. Fletcher had awakened some little time before Hollis; and after the first wonder and surprise at his surroundings, and when memory began to do her work, he was able to arrive at something like the truth concerning his situation. He felt sick: but the sight of Hollis asleep on the couch, with the certainty that he was in his room and bed, with the probability of the very confinement and talking to, from which he had fled the day before, gave him strength to arise, and the caution to move quietly about to find his clothing, and a door by which he might go down. But he was soon satisfied that Hollis had anticipated all this, and had made it impossible for him to get out without awakening him. And then the thought that Hollis would go out for breakfast, and if he were still asleep would leave him alone, caused him to act the part which Hollis had surmised. When he found that Hollis had called a messenger, and so did not intend to leave him, he was bitterly enraged, but determined at all events to be let alone. So he still lay with eyes closed, and his head drawn down, concealing a portion of his face, and breathed heavily, imitating sleep. His anger,

which had kept over from the day before, was fierce enough to quicken all his powers ; and he had probably never before performed his mental functions with greater quickness, than during that Sabbath morning. The purposes and plans which resulted, were expressions of the real inner man, with his unbelief, his pride, his self-contempt, his hate, and his hunger of soul. After a while it suited his purpose to awaken. He yawned, stretched, threw his head back, and opened his eyes. Hollis sat at the window with a book in his hand. He looked up at the first sign of life, and greeted Fletcher's first glance with a bright, genial smile.

"Hello!" said Fletcher, in well feigned surprise. "What does this mean?"

"Just what you see, my friend, added to what you may remember. You will not find it hard to reach a conclusion. I am glad you have awakened : our breakfast will be here soon."

Hollis had arisen, and come to the bedside, and now sat down upon it, and took Fletcher's hand, and went on :

"I want you to know, first of all, that I am your friend, Fletcher, and wish to cover you in this time of need. I have no wish to expose you, or have you disgraced. I hope you will believe this. Now, if you feel like dressing, do so, or lie here as you are as long as you choose. You had a terrible exposure last night, and may not feel like stirring ; you can take something to eat in bed."

All this time Fletcher had been regarding Hollis

with interest, and there was that in his face which Hollis could not read.

"What condition are my clothes in?" he asked, after a moment.

"Not very comfortable. I can lend you a suit."

"All right: perhaps that would be the thing; then I'll dress."

Hollis got him an outfit. Fletcher found when he attempted to rise that he was somewhat the worse for his spree, and soon he laid back upon the pillow. He passed his hand over his eyes and head, and it was evident to Hollis that he suffered, but he had learned not to ask many questions of this man. His surly, vindictive spirit was sure sooner or later to manifest itself in conversation upon any topic. So he avoided notice or comment, but busied himself about making things tidy in the room. Before Fletcher again attempted to arise the waiter came with a loaded tray, and Hollis was not a little surprised to see how his guest acquiesced in the entire arrangement for his comfort. His usual surliness had disappeared, and instead was manifest an interest, and almost geniality, for which he was wholly unprepared. He had expected to be obliged to almost quarrel with Fletcher to get him to submit to anything which he proposed.

Fletcher was too sick to eat; but drank his full share of the coffee, and Hollis sent the pot back to have it replenished, for which he received the courtesy of thanks.

"You are generous to me, Ellenwood," said Fletcher, at last, "as though I had been the most

faithful man in the world, instead of the fellow who slept at his post."

Hollis was abashed. He had avoided anything yet which would seem like forcing him into confessions, or which would indicate that he intended to "have a talk with him;" but it was evident that Fletcher was anxious to come from the profitless table comments, on the bill of fare, to the things beneath the surface, in the mind of each. This was confirmed by Fletcher, as he proceeded.

"I was pretty angry with you yesterday; but now I see you did right; a kind thing to us all in getting that money for Bess. If you hadn't, I should have been at Dem's, in the old place, where you and I have played together a few times, instead of here."

"Then you are glad to be here?" asked Hollis, wondering at what he heard.

"Yes, I am, and I'll tell you why. I've watched you; you know that; and in a very suspicious way. I've said you drank on the sly, and have made all kinds of fun of you; but all the time I have wished I knew whether there was anything permanent and real in your reformation, and in the help you professed to have; and, you'll be surprised, but I have thought if I could know it was all real, and I could have it, I'd like to get what you have."

Fletcher was almost as much surprised at this as Hollis was. His surprise consisted in the fact that there was so much truth in what he said. He was uttering the most secret and the best things of his nature, for the most unholy, criminal motive: or a

motive so mixed, that it was hard to analyze it. Could Hollis stand the force of an entirely unforeseen temptation, such as he had planned for him? If he could, if he did,—then he must acknowledge that there was such a thing as genuine reformation. If he did not, if he fell, as he hoped he would, as he intended he should, without help or remedy, then—well, it would be just as he had always known it was, that there was nothing in it all. It would take a God such as they told about, to save him from the snare. Was there such a God? No, of course not: but it should now be proven to him at least, so that the question would not come up again.

These were some of the thoughts that were under his words.

“It is all real, and you may know it,” said Hollis, covering the glad tumult in his heart, under a very quiet tone.

“Can you entirely resist the smell of liquor?” asked Fletcher abruptly, looking at him keenly.

Hollis hesitated a moment, then said,

“I keep away from it: but wherever my duty is, I can do all things through Him in whom I trust.”

“You always noticed the smell of it so quick: I was curious to know,” said Fletcher.

“Do you suppose you could take it as Graham is doing?” he asked again.

Hollis visibly shrank. The thing had been terrible to him, ever since he knew that Charles Graham was taking brandy and wine; and the thought had often come, what if he should sometime fall into the hands of a whiskey doctor: and when he had no power to

remonstrate, or to refuse, he should be compelled to take it; and he should get up from a sick bed, weak, nervous, and with the old appetite in complete sway; what would God do for him then? Would He rescue him? would He lay His hand on the demoniac thirst, and cast it out? would He work the miracle of saving him, so that he should not go on a drunken spree, and disgrace his profession of Christ? He had at one time been tortured with the feeling that he should sometime be drunk again; and the awful dread of it swept over his soul, as he sat with Fletcher, looking at him. At length he answered,

"I would never take that risk if I knew it, not for the world. But I don't think it is necessary. I should, however, trust in God to deliver me, if I was, when wholly without my ability to prevent it, brought under the influence of liquor."

"He would be God who could do that," thought Fletcher, while Hollis continued:

"But I think we keep temptations about us, by the circumstances we make. I am amazed that the Grahams should have kept that old doctor: they should have made it impossible for him to be called in any case. I am looking out for all these things. I have my physician. He has me down on his book: has his retainer's fee, and legal authority from me to take possession of me, if I should be hurt, or be sick, and unable to know about affairs. If any one should send for any other doctor, and he should have begun to prescribe for me, this physician has the right to take me out of any hands. As nearly as I can do it I have made everything in the world.

to contribute to the new life I am living in God. There may be circumstances which I can never control: those I trust to Him, and after I have done my best to forestall every evil thing, I can trust Him. I wish you knew the strength there is in this, Fletcher."

"If I knew there was such a help I'd have it," he replied, almost fiercely, "if I had to kill somebody to get it."

CHAPTER XXII.

S HALL I read to you, Fletcher ? ” asked Hollis, after a while, in which nothing had been said between them.

“ Do anything you like,” replied Fletcher.

Hollis looked quickly at him, in surprise again, at the change in the fellow. What could it mean ? If the real answer had been given to his question, it would have been somewhat like that which Charles Graham had given before. Maurice Fletcher was lying in wait ; on the watch, studying Hollis, as he might a machine, to see what he would do.

So Hollis read. He read the Bible : read religious and temperance papers : stopping now and then to talk a while. He gave Fletcher the best of nursing. A good dinner was served in season, and eaten with a relish, and soon after he arose and dressed, and sat with Hollis by the window, watching the passers-by, and the lights and shadows of the winter afternoon.

At length he said, suddenly :

“ I’d like to see Charles Graham.” .

“ Would you ? So would I,” said Hollis. “ Do you feel equal to going around that way ? I always go every day ; and usually stay there on Saturday night, and watch him.”

"Suppose we both watch him to-night," said Fletcher.

"You would not be able, Fletcher."

"Able? Try me and see. I have been called a pretty good nurse, if I am a surly fellow; and I think Graham would like to have me watch with him again."

"I know he has a deep regard for you, Fletcher, and a sincere wish that you should do right."

No reply was made to this, only as Fletcher set his teeth hard. After a moment he asked :

"Well, shall we do it?"

"If you like we'll go over and see about matters; they may have their arrangements made for the night: and you ought to have a good night's sleep, to be fit for duty to-morrow."

"Fit for—duty?—you—I—shall—shall I go back to her?"

"Your engine? Of course: didn't you feel that I expected you to go back?"

"I—no—I don't deserve it"

"Of course, Fletcher, it would not do for you to repeat this thing. You would have to go if you forgot again: but I do hope you will stop drinking from this time forever. You can have the help that saved me: take it: and all will be well."

"Wait till I prove it," he replied.

"Prove it? How? You must trust God and begin, before you can prove it."

"I'll begin," said Fletcher, and turned quickly away

Hollis looked earnestly after him, but humored his evident wish to be let alone.

"Thank you, Hol, for your good intentions toward me;" Fletcher said, abruptly, without turning about.

"You are welcome to all I have done, and much more of anything that I can do to help you."

Fletcher was evidently very anxious to see Mr. Graham, and while Hollis was completely mystified by his conduct, he, in the simplicity of his faith, believed that he saw tokens of the Spirit's work; and was willing to go out of his way anywhere, to do his part for this man. He thought, in view of the old relations between Fletcher and Graham, it was but natural, if Fletcher was in earnest, that he should wish to see his friend at this time. So he concluded to accede to his request, and go over and spend the night, if other arrangements had not been settled.

They arrived early in the evening, and found Annie Dayton in charge, and John Mark—expected, after church, for the night.

Annie was evidently moved by the sight of Hollis, as he entered the room: but as Fletcher followed closely behind, she was at once so interested as to forget all but the fact that this lost man, was possibly hovering on the edge of hope. What else could it mean, that he should be with Hollis? To be with Hollis meant much: all that was good to a man like Fletcher. There sprang an undefined suggestion as to what it might be for Annie Dayton to be in his companionship, from the inner chamber of her heart, which brought a beautiful tint to her cheek. She, however, greeted Hollis with dignity, and Fletcher with sweet kindness, and left them in what had come

to be an ante-room to the sick chamber, while she busied herself about. It had been arranged that she should be in attendance when John Mark was to watch, and Aunt Gracia when it was Hollis' night. Uncle Benjamin was a team by himself.

Hollis was embarrassed between his desire to let Fletcher have his way, and his purpose to keep out of Annie's. He was turning the matter over as to how it would do to leave Fletcher with John Mark. He sat musing over this. Fletcher picked up a book of war reminiscences, and appeared absorbed in it, when John entered. The cordiality of his meeting with Fletcher evidenced how deep was his interest. He was taken by surprise, and looked many questions into Hollis' face. To answer them he must have John Mark by himself a moment.

Fletcher returned to his book as John Mark dropped his hand, and took Hollis', and as he seemed buried in it, the two stepped out together. Hollis gave a hurried account of his finding of Fletcher, and the day he had spent with him, and told of his desire to watch with his old friend.

"But," he said, "I find this is your night, and—and—Annie's—and—"

"That's nothing:" said John Mark. "Fletcher must have his way: you must stay with him, I will go home."

"But John, she—"

"It's all right, old boy; don't fly in the face of providence. It's plain that it's your duty to stay with Fletcher: you may save his soul; the way of duty is the way to glory, I think I've heard our

mother say, so don't run. I'll not go in again : good night."

John Mark was gone before Hollis could really understand that it was so : and it was settled beyond his control, unless, indeed, he did some unusual, and unnatural thing, that he should spend the watching hours in the sick room with Annie as his attendant. When it was settled, he felt a thrill of deep gladness in his soul ; and yet determined to look well to his purpose to leave her as free from the annoyance of his intrusive love, as it was possible for him to do.

He went directly to find Annie. She was in the dining-room alone. He told her frankly, how it came about, that he, instead of John Mark, was to stay, and asked for orders. His whole person was eloquent of the rich depths of his soul, as he stood before her, looking down into her face ; but his words were simple, and direct, with no covert meanings. Annie looked up at him, and tried to stand and look on as he spake : but for some reason she felt that her eyes were traitorous in their intent, and veiled them with drooping lashes, in spite of herself. He was telling her about Fletcher's wish to see his friend. A deep color arose and spread over her cheek, forehead, and neck. He went on in the same matter-of-fact recital, and talk about the sick room arrangements : but his voice, never so carefully controlled, was weighted with something, that made her ears burn. He asked her a simple question : but her tongue seemed unable to answer. She tried—but her lips quivered ; she felt a rush of many waters surging up to the surface, and began to turn about, to go away.

Hollis stepped one step toward her, extended his hand, but did not touch her, and said, "Annie," as he had never spoken anything before.

She stood perfectly still, half turned as she was. He waited one little breath, then with one long step, was at her side. He took her hand—it fluttered against his palm.

"Annie, is it not God's will? Shall I dare be silent now?"

She said nothing—but bowed her head a little—not so much but that he saw how her lips trembled and the tears rained down over her cheeks. His face became luminous with a great joy, and yet it was tempered with awe.

"Annie—I am—am I not answered—may I not be glad—I am yours, you are mine, and we both together are God's!"

She lifted her face—her beautiful wet eyes to his—moved her lips. He heard no voice—but he read the unuttered words and was satisfied.

Then came a faint chime of a little bell from the sick room. Annie turned her face up one second full into his: he bent down over it, and drew her closely to him, just one heart beat, and she sprang to answer the summons.

Hollis stood like one in a dream. What had happened? Something that had set in motion within him all the sweet, deep, refreshing tides of holy passion. Was he the same man that had come in five minutes before? Was this of his planning? If so he had outwitted himself. Had John Mark planned it? If so, he was a magician. Or was it Fletcher

who had done it? Or was it for this that Charles Graham had come down to the verge of death? If so—anyhow, God be praised! For he had certainly compelled all these things to work together for his good. His purpose had been thwarted. He must write at once to his mother that he had given up going West.

“Hollis!”

He started as though an electric shock had struck him. It was Annie’s voice, calling him from the door into the sick room. He turned and waited, abashed before her. He could not see the wondrous light and beauty of her face, for the mists which enveloped him: but she had called him.

“Yes,” he answered, and went forward toward the glory of her presence.

He reached out and found her hand waiting for him.

“Charley wants you, dear.”

He held her hand all the way to the bedside. Charles Graham saw it: smiled, under cover of a frown, feebly lifted his hand and laid it upon theirs; but at almost the same instant, in a fretful tone, said:

“I ought not to be left alone like this.”

“That is so,” said Hollis, like one suddenly brought to his senses, “and you shall not be: forgive us, but you know—”

“Yes, I know: I’m glad; but you can be happy long after I am dead; don’t neglect me now.”

Hollis was shocked and grieved. The tone and words were blows in the face of his joy.

"I must have something—warm—strong, to—lean on—I am so weak. Ha ! who's that ?" His eyes rolled and glared toward the door of the room where Fletcher had been left.

Hollis turned. Fletcher stood back in the dim light, looking in upon them ; his eyes wide and piercing ; his face white and eager. Hollis breathed a prayer for Charles Graham, that he might not be left in this extremity of weakness, to dishonor God, and hinder his work for this soul.

"It's Maurice Fletcher," answered Hollis. "He wanted to see you, Charley : shall he come in ? He's going to stay with you to-night."

"He ?" gasped Charles Graham. "Hollis, taint no place—for—him. O—God !" and he closed his eyes, with a deep sigh.

Hollis knelt beside him, laid his arm over him, and with his lips at his ear, said :

"Charley, Maurice is feeling after help : you know our little scheme, and why John Mark went into the factory ; this comes of it. Maurice wanted to come : you can help him : God help you, poor, dear, sick Charley, this is given you to do, and—"

"Don't give poor, little me any such thing to do : O God ! But give me something hot and strong."

Hollis felt his whole frame thrill with horror at the look, the tone, the words, the everything that confronted him in the person of his more than brother. He had not seen him like this before.

"Hollis, you understand—give me—something, quick."

While Annie and Hollis were in the dining-room,

and Charles Graham slept, Fletcher had entered the room quietly, and investigated. He had found, evidently, something which he wanted, for he put it in his pocket, and then went back to the place where he had been left, and sat with the book, as before, when the little bell rang, and Annie answered the call. He had been drawn by the strange spirit that possessed him, to take the position of observation in which he had been seen.

At Charles Graham's call for something, Annie had gone out quickly, and Fletcher had come forward; the eagerness of his face and manner intensified. At this last appeal for "Something," he sprang in—a strange wild light in his eyes, his hand on his pocket; but at the same time, Annie came through the opposite door, with a steaming cup in her hand. Fletcher looked thwarted, but no one had noticed his passion, and his confusion was unheeded. He sank down in a corner, and watched, as Hollis and Annie, with something new in their faces, ministered to the sick man.

The hot nourishing draught partially quieted Charles Graham, but Hollis and Fletcher both knew that he was not satisfied.

"Miss Dayton had better get some rest now," said Fletcher, in an anxious tone. "We can do all he needs."

"Yes Annie," ("dear" he thought and looked, but could not speak in ears profane) "there is no need for you now, is there? Everything is all ready for us, is it not? Then, as Mr. Fletcher says, perhaps you had better rest."

"Yes, Annie," said Charles. "Fletcher :—that you ?"

Fletcher came to his side, sobered, and as if almost afraid.

"You did me a great service oncë :—"

"O Charley, that was nothing."

"And now you're come to do me another ; and maybe you can."

"Maybe I can," said Fletcher, and as the two looked at each other, there was an understanding between them of more than was spoken.

Annie gave a few directions, further, and then withdrew.

"We generally sit in the other room, unless he wants something," said Hollis in a low tone to Fletcher, and led the way in. Fletcher followed after, standing a second, and telegraphing to Charles Graham, who was watching him.

A couch was placed near the door of this ante-room, in position so that the watcher lying upon it, could command a view of the sick man.

"You'd better take this couch, Fletcher," said Hollis, "and sleep : there will be nothing to require us both, and you may just as well rest ; you see he is in no condition for talking."

"Now," said Fletcher, "I'll tell you what ; I'll sit up until midnight, and you lie down and sleep. I can just as well 's not, I'm not likely to sleep."

"Nor I, Fletcher ;" and Hollis' heart gave a bound as he thought of what joy would drive sleep from his eyes, to-night, at least.

"Yes, you will : you didn't sleep last night much ;

I'll watch him good, and if I think he needs you, I'll call you."

"All right: you shall have your way. You have a sort of right to help us in the care of him; I'll not dispute it."

"Thank you," said Fletcher in a constrained tone; while a strange expression covered his face. Hollis threw himself on the couch and closed his eyes. Charles Graham lay looking at him, and Fletcher sat watching them both. His thoughts and feelings were such as he could not have expressed in words, because for the world he would not; but He who reads all hearts, looking in, saw something like this:

"The chance is coming for me to prove it false or true. I've never had a good chance before: I'll make the most of this. My father said in words that it was true, but in his life he said it was a lie. He intended that I should preach a thing I believed to be a lie. I have grown into what he made me. But he did not make me what I want to be. Hollis says he is saved: is he? I'll see. We'll see if your God can save you after I have done it. Nothing but a God can. There is no God: you can't be saved: I'm sorry; I wish I didn't have to do it—after what I saw to-night. She—will—be—like—Mad'line, but if you should stand up straight and strong, the same new grand Hollis after all, I shall know it is true, and I'll try, myself, to find Him. O, I wish there was a God: may be there is; I'll see."

Over and over again, his mind turned, like a wheel, along this track of speculation, questioning, and resolving.

All was still in the sick room, for Charles Graham had dropped off again, into the stupor which seemed often more like death than sleep. And Hollis, as he lay wrapped in delicious thoughts, sweet and pure, such as the love that is born in heaven breathes into a true man's heart,—his eyelids pressed down by the touch of Peace, resting from every care, slept at length. His steady breathing fell upon the ear and heart of Maurice Fletcher, as the signal for action. The crucial moment had come to more lives than one. A moment fraught with destiny. There was no time to lose, thought Fletcher. He had his shoes in his hand, as he sat an instant longer, looking at the sleepers, with eyes that glowed like coals. He arose, and quickly, stealthily, stepped to the hall, and set his shoes outside. Then drawing the bottle which he had taken out of the closet from his pocket, he drew the cork; poured a little of its contents into a wine glass, which he had prepared with a few drops of water and sugar, and with the open bottle in one hand, and the glass in the other, silently but quickly approached Hollis. He was lying upon his back, one hand upon his breast, the other lying over his head. His lips were parted; his eyelashes on his cheeks, his whole face full of rest and peace. Fletcher hesitated a second, and stood regarding him; cast a look at Charles Graham; then with a settling of his face into the most stolid determination, he bent over Hollis; placed the open bottle near the hand on his breast, and tipping the glass carefully but quickly, dropped the contents on his parted lips, and then glided like a shadow into the hall. There was a

gurgles as of a spasmodic swallowing ; a smack as of the lips, an exclamation,—then a hush.

Fletcher could hear his heart beat, as he leaned forward and listened. He did not dare get near enough to see, but he strained his ears to hear the slightest sound.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOLLIS in his sleep had dreamed that he was walking and talking as on Saturday night with John Mark, and talking about Annie. John Mark was saying again the things that he had thanked him for, that brought him comfort. As they talked he looked up and saw Annie standing by the new house, being builded of the bricks drawn out of the fire; he was beside her on his couch; and began to tell her the old sweet story, when suddenly a strange creature, part man, part engine, arose before him, and extended toward him a glass of brandy; and although he did not touch it, immediately the liquor leaped, instinct with life, from the glass, shining, beaded, red, and began to crawl through his lips and down his throat; and every fibre of his being awoke, as it dragged its fiery length toward his vitals. He sprang toward Annie, who stood with eyes dilating with horror before him, and found himself sitting up, with the bottle in his hand, and the brandy on his tongue, and coursing like fire along his nerves.

What did it mean? The light was dim: where was he? His brain was dazed by the tumult in his veins. A wild cry seemed ringing through all the avenues of sense for drink. He looked up and saw

Charles Graham with his hand lifted over his head, and his white face and dark pleading eyes turned full upon him.

"Hollis!" It was a whispered entreaty, a sob of agony.

The strong odor from the open bottle and the liquor spilled upon his clothes, arose to his nostrils; his tongue craved it, a hundred voices within him called for it, and yet he did not seem to know the way to his lips. He was in a mental struggle for memory. The sight of Charles Graham helped him, and in a moment the facts were all before him. The sick room, Fletcher, John Mark, Annie, his betrothed wife Annie; but how came this bottle in his hand? and this taste on his lips? this fire thrilling his nerves?

He got up: still holding the bottle.

"Fletcher!"

No answer.

"Hollis:" again came the voice of Charles Graham, in surprise and alarm. "You—have—not—you are not drinking that, Hollis?"

He went toward the bed, holding the bottle tightly; his face contorted with the awful struggle which convulsed him.

"No, Charley:" he said at length. "I am not drinking this. I shall not, O-o-o, I shall not; God helping me. O-o, what does it mean? it is in my mouth, in my veins, a fire—O! Your bottle, Charley: your medicine: but death—death: what shall I do with it? it burns me; I want it: my soul—how I want it! Can I live in your house and not drink it? O—"

"Throw it out, Hollis, quick ! there : the window : everything : pitch the stuff all out : every bottle. I'm wild for it ; it is death ; we should drink, and die together. God forgive me !"

"Charley : " and Hollis' voice was stern and husky. "Have you been out of bed ? did you do this ? somebody must have ; did you ?"

"Do what ?—out of bed ? No !"

"How did I get this bottle ? I was dreaming. Maybe I did get up in my sleep and get it ; folks have done as strange things. It is not safe to have it about."

"Throw it away ! I tell you, and—and pray, Hollis ; pray."

Hollis went to the window, and lifted it higher ; as he did so, he saw a shadow pass by, from the rear toward the front, and thought :

"That's Fletcher ; out of doors ; could he have done this ?"

He threw the bottle against a wall, and heard it break. He remained with his head out, and filled his lungs with the bracing air, looked up at the starry sky, and cried to his God, and thought of Annie.

"Hollis, take the rest of the stuff, and throw it after it," called Charles Graham.

He obeyed : going to the closet he gathered all the bottles and packages in his arms and returned to the window. He was sure again that a man's form glided away as he approached.

"Fletcher : he's watching : he did it, the scoundrel ! That's what he meant : the poor fellow, when he said he'd prove it. God help me !"

The fiery current surged through his body. His temples throbbed, his throat was occasionally convulsed, periodically, it seemed, he felt an almost irresistible desire to drain the bottles which he was flinging against the wall beyond,—but he was conscious of a restraining and sustaining power, such as he had never before had the occasion to know; and in the midst of the struggle, a wave of joy, sweet and fragrant with heavenly odors, came like the tide of a great sea over him,—and a voice seemed to say,

“Art thou answered? will not thy God keep thee? In seven troubles He will not forsake thee.”

The last phial was thrown away. He drew the window down as before, and turned toward the bed. Charles lay back, whiter if possible than before, and with a look of pain, pitiful to see.

He moved his hand: Hollis took it.

“Pray,” he said, “Pray.”

Hollis knelt—silence for a second filled the place, broken by a stealthy sound as of some one coming softly in to the other room. The peculiar sensation of being stabbed in the back by critical eyes, went through him—but he cared not, he only took note of the fact, and throwing his arms about his companion in need, he lifted up his voice, and poured out his soul to God.

Annie was lying in an adjoining room: the doors closed,—wakeful: wondering at this new surprise that had been thrust upon her; glad with a sober gladness, that it was understood at last, and that she knew the will of God concerning her.

Annie Dayton had been happy in the work she

was doing for the girls, because she knew it was a good work; a much-needed benevolence. She was a young woman of convictions, and in these convictions her beautiful house had its foundations. She took delight in the development of the plan which had been shown her in the mount to which her sorrowful first love had lifted her. Much had been accomplished: she expected to go on accomplishing. She said to herself and brother Will, that this was her life work, and that she was content. But those who knew her best, and loved her work the most devoutly, saw that she was being robbed in her womanhood, by this work, of the very things which would be needed to make it a perpetual benefaction. Beside the money and time, she was giving something which she could not afford to give; for which she seemed to be receiving no compensation, and which, being missed by her life, was leaving marks on her young face, which she had no right to wear.

She was but twenty-three and a half, and with the natural instincts and motives of a healthful woman, strong within, yet shutting herself completely away from the natural associations of her sex.

Hollis Ellenwood had annoyed her, because she could not be indifferent to the fact of his love. Nor could she allow it, she thought, even while her heart reached out secretly after him. She had often since that Christmas night, wondered what would come of it; when, and in what manner, he and his love would thrust themselves again upon her. But he was not of the thrusting kind, as she had discovered; his extreme reserve interested her, and held her

attention; worried and vexed her, and drew upon her, until she was in that condition of weariness, from wonder and waiting, that she was unable to keep eyes and heart under control, in his presence. And now it was all over: they understood: the *Homo Deus*, "I and you—you and I—we and God," had become a reality in her life.

Of course she could not sleep. She wondered how Hollis would look when she saw him again. Her little wax taper, just over her open watch, kept shining upon the noiseless wings of time. At such an hour she should have good excuse to go out and see.

At length strange sounds came to her ears; the thud and crash of the breaking bottles—the voices. She became excited, curious; what could be the meaning of it? But Hollis was there; he would attend to all that was necessary, until it was time for her to go for her own share in the service. Sometimes a pang of uneasiness came over her, as she remembered the contraband articles in the closet, and Fletcher; but Hollis was there. Once a thought came, like the whispering of a fiend, which made her shiver and spring up; but she loyally settled back and waited.

Twelve o'clock, said the wax light, as it smiled into the face of the little dial; at the same instant a chime dropped down from the City Hall tower, and she arose, lifted the little light, and looked in the glass, and went out. She was arrested at the door by the voice of his praying. What a strange pathos was in it. Her heart was moved to pray. So she,

standing outside, they kneeling within, and Fletcher, crouching in the dim light, with his keenly questioning eyes scanning everything, were bowed before God.

The voice of prayer ceased, and she heard Charles Graham say, in a tremulous, prayerful tone :

“Now send for Doctor Cleives, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THERE was an immediate radical change in affairs in the Graham Cottage. Dr. Cleives was installed. Dr. Rust did not take his dismissal, for the cause frankly given, very kindly; and the Dates were insulted, in this treatment of the old family physician. Hortense found her heart relieved of a great, unclean burden; but Charles Graham was not free. The haunting demon had a chance to prove his relish for sweet Christian flesh and blood. And the quenchless thirst of lost souls, seemed burning at his throat. But Hollis knew it all, and spent every spare moment with him, in fact, almost lived at the cottage these days. The whole circle of friends were taken into the secret of that awful night, and so surrounded these two, in the heat of the battle, with their strong support.

Fletcher was regarded with unqualified horror by them all. But Hollis and John Mark said they understood it, and were satisfied.

"I am glad," said Hollis, one day, to Annie, "that I was given that test, if it must come to any man. It answered my own great question, and I trust will answer his, when he has time to say it is finished."

"But it must be a lost soul that could do such a thing."

"You are right, dear: a lost, hopeless, reckless soul; that is what he was."

"What is he now, then?"

"A lost soul still; but not altogether hopeless, and no longer reckless. He is waiting for the confirmation of his hope: still lying in wait for my life, which is hidden with Christ."

"That he might slay it? O horrible!"

"No, no, darling: but that he may know if it is really life, or only a galvanized thing, that will soon fall into a more ghastly death. I have come to think that the whole world is just as anxious as he was, for a proof. He has but acted out the eager burning skepticism of the world, that wants to know. I shall never forget how he uttered that strange determination to "prove it." He would have that help, if there was such a thing, if he had to kill somebody to get it: I remember when I felt something the same. I envied the clean men who had every day the sober successful life, the erect carriage, the assurance of position, that I could only have a taste of, once in a while; and that always flavored with the bitter of self-contempt, and fear for the future."

"But now, dear?"

"Now? O—I am content. I am glad I was granted this test. The battle was through billows of fire, and the earth has not cooled under my feet yet; but I know God as I did not; also I know this demon, and men,—and I have you, my own—my own Annie; and what more can I want? Only this, but it is necessary to all the rest, that I should give Fletcher his proof."

"How does he act?"

"Sober, instead of sullen ; watchful."

"Has he drank any since?"

"I do not think so. I don't think he has felt that he had time for anything else but to watch me. Then he got afraid for himself, and he knows if he does drink, he goes at once."

"What do you expect about Charley?" she asked, tremulously. "I am apprehensive: very. O, to see him die! It will be dreadful!"

"Dreadful? Only as it was dreadful years ago, for him to be discharged and sent home, from the discomforts of hospital fare, with his wound. I have come to look at it as Aunt Gracia teaches. He will not die: but he cannot stay here. He must go away to better care, and increased comfort: his condition requires it: and knowing what I do, of what life here would be to him from this on, I wish him joy of his discharge."

They looked day-by-day for tokens of the end. Dr. Rust said he was a dead man already. And in fact, he lay just on the verge of time, with the roar of the eternal sea in his ears. Dr. Cleives watched him with jealous Christian love. He administered remedies put up in the spirit of prayer, instead of the spirit of alcohol. He saw from the first, that all he could hope to do was to counteract by means medical, moral, and spiritual, the effect of the corroding poison, which was tormenting nerves and blood; and help him to rest, and peace, and a little strength before he should go hence. His efforts were rewarded even beyond his hope. Charles Graham not only began to

rest, and hope, and smile, instead of fret and frown ; but seemed suddenly to rally in a way that surprised them all. He grew comfortable, his cough ceased, he slept and ate, and could converse with comparative ease ; was able to enjoy the society of his friends, and the children. His room became a Bethel, where, like Jacob, after his wrestling, he could wait and commune with God ; and to which he welcomed with peculiar delight, the dear circle which gathered about his couch. All the news of church, and the Union Hall work, were discussed there : the cases of different persons in whom they were interested were brought there for prayer ; city affairs, and everything national which showed where the battle line for God, and Home, and Native Land was being drawn, were talked and prayed over in that place. Once his quiet chamber was converted into a committee room, preliminary to a temperance ticket for the Spring election : and the names of men for public service were canvassed.

“ I tell you,” said Hollis, at this “ session,” “ one thing we must do for our fall election : we must have in view, the proposed amendment petition, in the Legislature ; and see that we send some true men from our district. I would like to see William Dayton represent us in the Legislature.”

“ I would like to see Hollis Ellenwood,” said John Mark ; “ and I’m going to see that he is nominated.”

“ That’s good for sweetening,” said Hollis, “ but you can’t live on sugar. No : I’m in earnest. William Dayton is the man.”

“ You will not think so when you know him as well as I do,” said John Mark.

These talks, and discussions, and plans, made Charles Graham feel, sometimes, that he yet belonged to the busy world, but in his heart he knew better. He enjoyed all who came ; but the most precious moments were those in which he had his little ones about him ; or when Hortense sat with her baby, and they talked together about the future of their children, and especially about Philip. He talked from David's standpoint : and constantly labored to prepare as abundantly beforehand, as he could, at this late day, and in his weakness.

One day he had the little one lying beside him on the bed, and Philip and Benny were playing with his funny fingers, while Clementine stood waiting to take it, the moment it began to weary papa. At length he said :

"I'd better take you with me."

"Who, papa ?" asked Philip. "Me ?"

Papa only smiled.

"Where, papa ?" piped Benny. "To grand-ma's ?"

"No, dear."

"Then where ? You can't go anywhere : you're sick."

"I need not have spoken so loud, I guess : and yet I don't :—it's all right : Philip and Clementine understand."

"Do you ?" asked Benny, looking from one to the other.

The tears that sprang to the eyes of the little girl, and that weighted Philip's long lashes, answered the question.

"And Benny may just as well," he continued. "I wish you could all so understand it as to lose the pain of it; and have always a blessed memory of these days, my children."

"But you're better, papa," said Clementine, "you are going to get well."

"Yes: I am feeling nicely, and I shall get well."

"And go and take baby and us all to grandma's," cried Benny, with delight. "O, I'm so glad, for Rubert Sloan said you were going to die, and then we'd have to have the hearse come and carry you off, to bury, like they did—"

"Don't, Benny, my darling!"

It was Mrs. Graham, who, entering in time to hear these words, gasped out this protest, taking the boy in her arms, as she knelt by the bed.

"Never fear, Hortense, darling: as Socrates said, 'they may bury me if they can catch me,' but I shall be too quick for them. I feel it all through me: as Jesus said, I shall never die."

"You'll get right up and run, won't you, papa, if they go to catch you, to hearse and bury you?" cried Benny, with animation, while his mother hid her face among his curls.

"They will have to take this body, which is, after all, but the coat I wear; and carry it away and put it out of sight, in some dark place, until it has been made clean and fit for me to wear again."

"This soldier coat?" and Benny laid his hand on the sleeve of the fatigue suit he wore.

"Yes: this soldier coat, not that," touching the cloth, "but this soldier coat," touching his flesh.

"O!" said Benny, knitting his brows, "is that a coat?" and he touched the flesh with his finger.

"Yes, only a coat."

"And is this my coat?" touching his arm, and neck, and cheek.

"Yes."

"And is this baby's, and mamma's, and Phil's, and Clem's?" suiting the action to his words.

"Yes."

"All coats?"

"All coats."

"An' you're goin' to take yours off?"

"Yes, dear."

"O! An' what will you wear then, papa?"

"A white morning gown—whiter than snow."

"O! And then will you put this cleaned up one on, when you dress up again?"

"Yes, and it will never get soiled again."

"Will it be always awfully clean?"

"Yes, dear, very clean; and that means that papa will never get sick any more."

"O! O!" and Bennie clapped his hands. "I think that'll be just splendid: don't you, mamma?"

Mamma had nothing to say. She only kissed the little foolish lips that prattled so glibly of things so momentous, so awful.

"Hortense," said her husband, reaching over and laying his hand on her neck, "I didn't think to bring this on to-day: but it has come, out of my much thinking, at last. It must be, dear: and soon: there are two things I want first, though."

"Yes, dear."

“Just two things: I want our friends invited to come here next Sabbath afternoon, with our pastor, and that we should have prayer, and all sign the pledge, and name the baby, and give him to God and his people. The pledge I want in the old family Bible. It is David’s method, you know, dear. There are to be temples: beautiful, magnificent; of praise and glory: and as he prepared abundantly before his death, so must I, before I go hence, to be no more.”

“My darling, it shall be as you say: but you certainly are mistaken: you are going to stay: just think how much stronger you are; you could not talk a little while ago, as you do now, and—O—you must have courage and stay.”

There was a moment’s silence; then he said,

“Hortense, if you should ask it, you would not know what you were asking. I could never walk these streets again, free from—that demon’s scar: I should try to walk and live like a man, if it were God’s will; but—I am thankful that it is not: that my discharge has been issued, and I only wait the train. I am glad I can talk, and be comfortable: but time is short, dear; Sunday is none too soon for this that I want. I want you to ask Fletchers—Sloans:—”

“I will.”

“And your people all.”

“Yes.”

“You’ll know whom, besides.”

“I’ll make out a list and read it to you.”

“Yes: that will do; now, Clement may have her baby.”

"Clementine sprang quickly, and lifted the dainty little bundle, and folding it to her bosom, sat down in a low, wicker chair. She spread all the baby's white drapery about her, and began rocking softly. The little boys stole out, and her father watched the little "house mother" until his eyes drooped and he fell asleep.

The invitations were passed quietly about; the hour set for two o'clock, just before the Gospel Meeting. On Friday, a quantity of beautiful evergreen wreaths were brought by Uncle Benjamin, and Annie Dayton went from room to room hanging the most graceful decorations everywhere. Bouquets of fresh flowers from the conservatory at Gracia Lodge, were to come on Saturday, to be added the last thing, the evening before the Sabbath.

To her was delegated the task of preparing the pledge in the family Bible. It was done, written in her chaste style, legible as print; and the book laid open on the stand in the front parlor, with pen and ink at hand.

Hortense explained these preparations to the boys, so that even Benny might comprehend their import. He was impatient to do his part at once: and could not understand why he must wait until the Sabbath to sign that pledge. But when told that it was simply to please papa: and because it was a "Sabbath thing" to do, as Philip expressed it, he was satisfied.

"Only," he said to Philip, "if they should happen to come for papa's coat 'fore Sunday, then, you see, he couldn't come out 'thout a coat to do it with us: then I s'pose we'd have to wait till he came back."

These words of little Benny were never forgotten.

Friday night passed peacefully by, but on Saturday morning every one knew that the date of their gathering together, had been set in eternity.

Into the pleasant back parlor, the May sun shone through soft white draperies. Blooming plants filled the bay window : Clementine's bird sang loudly, with triumph in his tone. The baby that never cried, cooed in his crib, and in the midst, Charles Graham lay panting his breath away. They said upon the streets, " Charles Graham is dying : " but the place where he lay seemed lifted up out of all shadow, away from all sorrow, and to be really what the sunshine, and flowers, and bird-song, and cooing baby made it seem, the very centre of active, cheerful, uninterrupted life. The bed on which, all battles ended, rested the soldier of the good fight, was the throne of an indescribable glory, that had come down to them from above, and shut him in. But in the outskirts of the glory and joy that wrapped about the passing soul, and held her, exulting, as she plumed her wings for flight, there was sorrow. In spite of all faith, of all precepts, of all promises, there was sorrow too deep for tears, when Hortense Graham knelt with her three children about her. She was clinging to one cold hand, while the awe-stricken trio leaned against her, and waited unnoticed.

The door opened, and Doctor Cleives entered.

" Ah : " he said, " he is going out."

" Yes : " came brokenly from the ashen lips : " out—of the—battle—smoke—into the glory of victory."

His tone was set to an unearthly key. He was

dressed in his soldier's fatigue suit, which had been his favorite home and office wear; above his head, on the wall, hung a sword across its scabbard, with an evergreen wreath pendent from the hilt; so no language could have been more fitting.

Doctor Cleives came to the bed-side, and took the transparent hand, laid his finger on the wrist, and so told off the fluttering heart-beats.

"How—long—doctor?"

"Not long, my friend."

The doctor's voice broke a little in its firmness, for he loved this man, and could hardly spare him yet.

"You do not suffer?" he asked, after a moment.

"No: only—for them. She can't—see—but I leave her with—Our Father. I should like if—I could take their loneliness away with me, but He will comfort—"

He paused, gasping. After a moment he broke forth,

"O-o-o-o," lifting his hand, while his eyes dilated. Hortense bent over him: he looked away off through her eyes, into something far beyond.

"My darling," she cried, "what do you see?"

"O—I see Jesus: glory un—utterable."

His voice rang like a bell, and he kept repeating the rapturous cry, beckoning with his hand. His eyes overflowed from their supernatural depths, with the light that was poured into them from the beatific vision. He became still: held his breath, and lay as if transfixed. The silence was awesome, broken once only by a thrill from the bird, and the baby's answering coo.

At last he cried out,

“Come, Lord Jesus—quickly!” and again lay breathless, with a fixed gaze heavenward.

The spirit seemed hovering, disembodied, radiant, over the motionless clay for an instant, then there was a long-drawn sigh, a shadow over eyes, and face, and Hortense saw that he was looking mournfully at her.

“O my darling!” she cried, with a tearless sob.

“I must wait just a little while,” he said, wearily, and turned upon his pillow.

Then began the slow, laborious passage of the dark valley. The physical tenaciousness of life, instinct with immortality, loth to surrender even for a little while its heaven-born companion, panted and struggled, protesting against the mystery of dissolution, while the watchful group waited in that tense silence, which marks the passage of such an hour. The journey seemed endless. The surging of the life-tide, beating in upon the heart of the pale woman, as if it were a rock, in a sea driven by a mighty gale, swept it clear of hope, and left it cold and numb. The awful tension warped the faces of the children, and caused even the old physician to wonder. At length, however, so suddenly that every heart grew still, the labor ended, and Charles Graham had passed out. The glory which he saw, closed up the way behind him; and lingered, retouching every feature of the dead clay with a beauty that made it seem immortal, and fixed it in memory forever.

No voice could cry out in that presence: even the children were hushed. A few moments of silent

waiting, in watching, passed; and then Hortense arose, closed the lids over the fixed eyes, and turning to the cradle, lifted the smiling baby to her breast; and holding her hand backward toward the children, beckoning, led the way out.

CHAPTER XXV.

HORTENSE sat nursing her baby, with Clementine at her feet, leaning upon her knees. The little boys had slipped out into the yard, where neighboring children gathered mutely about them, looking upon them as lifted into another atmosphere, by the great change that had come to them. They could not bear the scrutinizing looks, the dumb show of sympathy, so they went around the house to the front, hand-in-hand, walking soberly, with unchildlike dignity. Even Benny was too deeply impressed by the awful events transpiring in their home, to try to skip, or use his strength in the accustomed ways; for once, he naturally kept step with Philip. At the front, they found a strange man at the door, tying a long streamer of black cloth on the bell handle.

"What's that for?" asked Benny, quickly. "I don't like to have that there."

"Hush, Benny!" said Philip, who understood the death signal.

The man turned a compassionate look upon the children, but said nothing, and went on adjusting the heavy black folds.

"Say, Phil: I don't like that. What is it for?"

Philip could not speak a reply, but sat gazing at the black signal, his breast swelling, his eyes filling, until uncontrollable sobs burst forth.

"Phil—brother!" and Benny's arms were thrown about him.

"God pity the little fellows," said the man, reverently.

"What makes you say that?" said Benny. "Phil, don't cry."

"O Benny! I suppose you're too little to know," sobbed Philip, forgetting for a moment that he, compared to Benny, as far as size was concerned, was the little one; "but he's gone, Benny; we haven't any papa now."

Philip threw himself forward on the ground, hiding his face on the sweet young grass. The door opened, and Annie Dayton came out. She had a beautiful wreath of evergreens and feverfew in her hand.

"This, you see:" she began; then seeing the children both lying on the ground, where Benny had thrown himself beside Philip, crying bitterly, she stepped out to them, and drew them to her, while her own eyes grew large with tears.

"I don't like that black rag, Aunt Annie," said Benny. "And Phil said we haint got any papa any more, and that man said 'God pity the little fellows:' I don't see why I don't think papas are got rid of in any such way. If he has gone, he'll come back, won't he, Aunt Aunie? He said so, any way: and I guess he knows."

"Or you will go to him."

"But he said," and Benny's voice was shrill and very positive—"he said he was coming back, after his coat."

"His coat?"

"Yes: he said so. He said the hearse man might bury him if he could catch him; but he couldn't catch him, 'cause he'd be too quick for him. He said he had to go away and leave his old coat for them to put in a dark place to get clean, and fit to wear again; and he'd wear a white morning gown, till 'twas ready; then he'd come and put it on. So you see: O yes—and he'd never be sick any more when he put his new clean coat on; and I don't want Phil to cry—and he to say 'God pity the little fellows,' and I want that black flag taken off the door."

"Yes, dear, you are right: and that is just what I came out for;" said Annie, wiping her eyes and face. "And I brought this beautiful wreath to put on instead; for," to the man, in explanation, as he stood reverently listening, "we do not any of us like that. We know he would not; that is we do not want a sign of death hung out here, but of eternal life."

"Yes, madam, and he proceeded to untie the black ribband that held the bombazine. "I never could see the sense in this, anyhow; but it's the fashion, you know: I should like this better;" and he took the wreath, and the broad white lutestring which Annie handed him, and hung it instead. The children wiped their tears, and looked on smiling.

"There:" and Benny clapped his hands. "Now I guess I can play. Come, Phil: catch me if you can: and—bury me till papa comes back."

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The next day was the Sabbath. Who can tell the story of its slow movement, hour by hour, past the casket, where the still form rested? The faith of Hortense Graham had been better as a theory than a practice; and now she was plunged into the depths of a woe, which would have been better symbolized by the blackness of darkness at her door, than by the bright evergreens and flowers.

She had tried to endure in hope; but hope gave way to despair, during the long night; and she arose and waited for the morning, in the room where remained the mortal vestments of the life so dear.

The brilliant morning light she could not bear, so she shut it all out, and made the room dark. Here the children found her, and into this, Annie Dayton dared intrude.

The children had not spoken, but stood huddled at her side; but Annie said:

“Don’t stay in here in the dark, dear Hortense.”

“Yes: I must stay.”

Annie waited a silent moment, looking into the casket. The awful spell of set clay in human form, and in the likeness of Charles Graham, began to weave itself about her, and chill her very soul; then she spoke again.

“It really is not well for you or the children, here in this gloom, and with this.”

“Is it not our own gloom? how can we escape it? It would follow us out into the sun: and that is ours: all that’s left. We’ll stay together while we can: he goes so soon.”

“He has gone already. He is not here.”

“Yes:—and no. We will stay until—so long as we can see his face. Was ever clay of such noble form?”

She had arisen, and was bending over it.

Remonstrance was useless. Annie stood beside her a moment longer, and then taking the hands of the children, led them out into the sunshine and fragrance of the May.

Hortense bowed alone, under the burden of her faithless sorrow. Her brain seemed dead, her heart numb. Turning her eyes, she noticed the wreath, pendent from the sword hilt, and the other decorations scattered about. A spasm passed over her face, and she moaned,

“O how like fools we were.”

The door opened, and Annie came in, bringing the baby.

“The little one wants his mamma,” she said.

Hortense took the child; held him balanced on her hands a moment, then laid him on the dead bosom of the form she called its father; and bowed her head upon the baby’s hands. Then she remembered all the vows which she and Charles Graham had taken together before God, for the faithful training of their children; but now she, and this little one were alone. She pressed him down upon the dead bosom, as though she would lay the burden of him, and his little life on the heart that had been so strong and tender, and for the first time in its little life, the baby made a cry. She bowed her cheek upon his mouth and so soothed him, and thought over in his behalf, the words of prayer and promise which she could not speak.

This child had especial claim on God, she said within herself, for he had been strangely cheated of his birthright, in that his father did not stay long enough to give him a name and place in the house of God ; and now God, the Eternal Father, who robbed him, must somehow make it right with the child.

The children, restless in their strange loneliness, came in again.

"Mamma," whispered Philip, "where are you ? I can't see you : it's so dark."

She turned and looked at him almost sternly. His eyes adapted themselves to the dimness, and his sight began to come : he saw the strangeness of her face toward him, and sobbed out :

"Mamma, don't ! it seems 's if everybody's dead, and I can't live."

"I can't live : " echoed Benny, his eyes wide with anguish.

She did not answer. There was a moment of silence, then Philip sobbed out impatiently,

"Hasn't papa gone to heaven, mamma ? "

"Of course he has," she answered.

"An' is it really an' truly better 'n 'tis here ? "

"Y-e-s : I suppose it is."

"Then don't look so : 'n talk so—hard. Makes me 'fraid 'taint any of it true : and if 'taint true, what can we do ? "

"My dear child ! "

The mother spoke that time. Philip came closer, and grew bolder.

"And Harley Fletcher said his father said, he wished he could see somebody act once 's if 'twas

true, for any long time. He said, folks always acted 's if that was the end of 'em, when they died, and he b'lieved 'twas. Say—mamma, is it ? ”

Hortense was startled.

“ And say, mamma, what you got little brother in there for ? ” cried Benny, “ take him out of the dead place : don't put him in the dark with papa's old coat ; he don't need to be got clean. Come out where the sun shines.”

“ Do, mamma : ” pleaded Philip, “ we can't stay here : can we, Clem ? And we haint any papa to talk to, and the pledge in the Bible aint signed, and we want you.”

“ Yes, come, mamma.” It was Clementine, who spoke for the first time, taking her mother's hand.

“ The less father, the more mother : ” said Annie, who had stood waiting.

“ Truly,” answered Hortense, slowly, after a moment. “ I should be, must be so ; then let us go.”

She lifted the baby, gave it its place on her breast, and allowed her children to take her away from her dead.

The first thing she did, was to see that the pledge was signed, according to the father's request ; that the temples of God, which their bodies were, might be kept free from the demon drink, and its pollutions.

The next day was the burial. The people who had been invited for that Sabbath, came, with many beside. The prayers were offered which he had asked : the baby was named Charles : the covenant made by the mother alone, with God, and the child given back into her arms, to nurse for Him, by the minis-

ter, who had blessed it, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. She took him, pressed the sweet blossom of a face to hers a moment, gave him to Nora, and then turned to follow the hearse to the place of graves.

Benny watched with curious interest as they took away the "old coat," as he persisted in calling the body of the dead. Once he startled his mother by asking abruptly :

"Mamma : when will they come for our old coats, to put them away with papa's, to be made clean, like his ? "

"Sometime, dear."

"And then we'll go away to papa, and wear our white morning gowns ? "

"Yes, darling."

"O—that would be nice : I wish they'd stop now and take all our coats, and go back and get little Charley's, and put them all away together, and let us all go right with papa. We could catch up with him, if we started right off, I guess : 'cause I'd run on fast, and tell him to wait for you 'n Phil, 'n Clem : you'd have to carry baby you know : so you couldn't run. I can run : I did out to grandma's, faster 'n—O faster, 'n,—most as fast as lightning."

CHAPTER XXVI.

MANY questions came to Hortense Graham as she rode home in the carriage with her two sons and daughter alone, after the burial, and all through the weeks that followed. All were new questions; all hard enigmas: but none so hard and strange as this:

“How can I bring up these children alone.”

And yet, hard as it seemed, she did not begin to dream of the difficulties in the way of its solution.

She had small experience of the world, which was waiting for her and hers. She was not a coward, but with strange shrinking she looked from the carriage window, then from the threshold of her home; desolation about and behind her; and was afraid.

A little later she had no home to look out from.

After the funeral was over, she found that in some strange way it happened that she had no power to hold the little which she thought was her own. She was informed that her husband's partnership in the business was simply nominal; his investment being his work; and now that this had been withdrawn, there was nothing left for her.

She could stay in the house, by paying a specified rent, which she at once saw was beyond her ability.

The price set upon the place was in proportion to all the little conveniences, and niceties, which love had devised for her housekeeping : and which made the house one of the most desirable cottages in the city. And this, compared with her resources, made her feverish with haste to get out of it.

She could not linger where every hour of tarrying meant debt : and debt to those who could do such things, meant tyranny, degradation. She did not understand how affairs could have shaped themselves, to make it necessary for her to leave this consecrated spot ; and she could not stay to investigate mysteries, at such a price for staying. She had no way of resisting the current of influences that seemed to have set in against her, and could only move on. She took no one into her confidence. To do so she must make complaint of her own flesh and blood : that she could not do. Charles Graham had been the warm link that bound her to the Farm people. She was more reserved in her friendship : cool, was the word by which some people characterized her.

She was not so, but dignified, and self-contained, reticent of all things personal, so that it was no easy matter for any one to approach her about her affairs.

During the long illness of Charles Graham, everything else had been set aside as secondary, by the friends who felt their need ; and when he was at rest, they were compelled to turn to their own affairs. So it was not long before that awful time had to come, when Hortense should find herself alone, with her babes, in the little house which Nora had found, and secured for their home.

Everybody wondered at this sudden flitting from the old home, with its sacred associations and elegant comforts, to the tenement with two rooms, and a loft. But people never ventured to quiz any Date : and Mrs. Graham was a Date once : and with the development of the noble, Christian womanhood in her, she yet retained the Date elements of character. Aunt Gracia often ran in, but felt that she must wait for freely-given confidences. The quiet, uncomplaining dignity of the tearless widow, shut her in alone with her sorrow, from all the world, and almost, it seemed, from heaven. Nora, the long-tried servant, watched her with a patient sympathy, that expressed itself in carefulness about all domestic affairs, and which would have made for her a world and home out of nothing, if she could. When Hortense looked into her purse, to see how much she had left from all the expenses of removal, she found just ten dollars, all told. She looked about her : and with white lips drawn tightly, as if to shut back a cry, met again the question :

“ What can I do ? ”

Would this problem ever be solved ? It would not work itself out, she saw plainly. She must do it alone. Expenses must be reduced to the minimum : and when that was done, what should she do with all these little ones clinging to her skirts ? Her face grew stern : the children looked at her, askingly, and Nora studied how she could bring a change, the change of tears, into the face whose features seemed turning into marble. In the midst of this self-forgetful watching, solicitous, unselfish as love could make

her, Nora was startled one day, by the cold, sharp tone of her mistress, saying :

"Nora, you'll have to leave. I can't keep you any longer. Of course you know it; wondered why I haven't said it before, I presume."

"Ma'am!" and Nora stopped suddenly, in the act of lifting some china into the little cupboard.

"You know how 'tis, Nora: I shall not be able to pay you."

"Who's been afther sayin' anything 'bout pay?" Nora's tone was fierce in its indignation.

"No one—but of course it would have to be spoken about, and provided for. I am the one to speak first. I shouldn't be apt to leave you to ask for it. I owe you now more than all I have in the world: I shall have to sell something," she swept the furniture with her eye, "to pay you now: you must not stay another day."

"I think I see myself not stayin'! Sell something to pay me! I don't see what ye's sayin' such a thing to me, fur."

"But I must; I cannot be in debt to you, Nora: that I could not bear; you must go at once."

Nora stood speechless, looking into the hard, drawn, pale face before her. Tears slowly welled up into her eyes, and she dropped heavily into a chair.

Mrs. Graham continued in a slow, husky tone:

"I should have liked to keep you always, just as we have talked about. You've been a friend more than a servant, all these dreadful weeks, but—"

"I'll never go! I never will, I tell ye plain:" she interrupted, looking up with flushed cheeks and eyes

blazing through her tears. "The idea o' me goin' off an' leavin' ye with all them children, an' ye knowin' no more 'n nothin' what to do with 'em, to say nothin' o' all the work. How'd ye get the vittals, I'd loik to know? How'd ye get a dhrink o' wather outhen that well? an' not a drop comin' into the house? How'd ye do all the luggin' out an' in? 'twould break the back o' ye in short meetin'; an' thin what could ye be after doin' but sind for Nora back agin, to nurse ye, with ivery blessid thing to do beside. Indade! if I knows when I's well off I'll sthay now, and keep ye well, an' the work all sthrait, an' in hand; an' not go off at yer bidden', and let it all run away, so I'll have to run me two legs off to catch up. The idea! I'll sthay, I tell ye, till yer able to have me go, or till yees turns me off for a smarter an' handsome gurrl: so now! an' yees may make the best ye can of it. An' yees needn't say nothin' more 'bout it, an' don't yees open yer head 'bout no pay: the idea!"

Nora stopped, out of breath, and got up and turned to the china, as though the question was settled.

"But Nora:" and Mrs. Graham's voice was very firm, "that would not be right—you cannot afford to work without pay, and I cannot pay you, neither can I afford to get into debt: so you must go. I have thought it over. I appreciate your kind heart: you will come and see us often: but you must not increase the difficulties about me, by staying another day. Clementine, you know, can do a great many things, Benny, and even Philip, can help; we must bring our style of living down to our abil-

ity: we shall get along; and you must go before night."

Nora had begun again to put up the dishes, and now went doggedly on. She knew that this decision of Mrs. Graham was final, and must be obeyed; yet she resented it with all the strength of her faithful heart, which would have rendered service free and glad as ever made a home comfortable, for love's sake. Mrs. Graham sat still, watching her movements, as if waiting for her to obey, and go. After the dishes were all in place, Nora turned and said:

"Ye needn't watch me, to see how soon I'm goin'. I'll go so soon 'at ye'll wish me back: I'll tell ye that: and serve ye right too. And," with a sob, "when ye do, 'twould take but a wish, mind ye, to bring me. I'll come, sure 's ye're alive. An' now, darlint," her voice grown soft and crooning, "I knows about it: when I get time to sthop an' think: but yers come on un so suddint loik. I won't vex yees by teasin' to sthay. I'll go 'fore night, jist as ye said. An ye go in to t'other room an' sit down an rist ye, an' let me alone."

Mrs. Graham arose without a word, and went into the "other room," which served for bed-room and sitting-room; while Nora went to and fro with quick, decisive steps, making every moment count in something that should compel circumstances to be a little easier for the lonely woman to get on without her. She gathered every soiled article in the house, and washed and ironed: she drew out the nails which she had driven at convenient height for her, upon

which to hang the kitchen utensils, and drove them within easy reach of the children.

"It's a good thing for yees now, poor thing," she said, as if addressing the nail she was driving, "that we learnt Miss Clem to do housekeeping: but ye'll need Nora all the same."

"Hortense heard her, and mentally replied:

"Yes, we shall miss you, Nora: we shall hardly know what to do: but when so much is missed, the smaller losses do not count for much, after all."

Nora went on:

"Better if the boys had stayed with their grand-ma."

Hortense looked out of the window, where the children were at play, and if her thought had been spoken, it would have been:

"Better perhaps for them if they had never been born."

Nora worked on after supper, until dusk; then she gathered her things, put on her bonnet, kissed the children, shook hands, just a little stiffly, with Mrs. Graham, and went out.

The children stood looking after her through tears, from the gate, until she was out of sight. Hortense sat with her baby in her lap, her eyes burning and dry, looking at the wall upon which the dusk deepened. The lamp was left until it was absolutely needed, because it would take money to fill it every time. How could it be that she, Hortense Graham, should be so helpless, so desolate, so solitary? Why had she not been getting ready for this all her life? This was the one thing for which she should have

got ready. They both ought to have been looking forward to this, so that she should not have been taken so by surprise. And instead this seemed to be the one thing about which she had never thought. All the preparation had been for the children; with the expectation that they—he and she—should stay together always, and care for and educate them. But for her, the woman who must meet the world single-handed and alone, there had been, there was, nothing. That woman had not been expected in Hortense Graham. Where now were all her friends and counsellors? Where now was her God? What should she do with these children? What should she give them to eat? There was bread enough, of course: but who would win their share out of the grip of a greedy, grudging, unloving world? Who but she? No one. There was her father's ample store: then her brother, with his large income. She had learned too well the family maxim to expect anything from them. If anything was done for her, she must do it her "own self." But how? What could she do with these children? She would not ask why affairs were in this tangle: it implied a reproach upon the management of her good husband. Often the conviction came that he had provided for her, and that if she only knew how to get hold of it, she should find ample means for support. Something was surely wrong, somehow. Nothing to show but this frugal fare for all these years of strict attention to business, beyond the bare name of Graham and the factory sign?

Sometimes she thought she would confide in Aunt Gracia or in Hollis Ellenwood. Hollis, for whom she had prayed ; whom she, the helpless, faithless, had presumed to help. Who was she, that she should ever have prayed for anybody, or tried to help anybody ? Especially such a man as Hollis, whom Annie Dayton was going to marry ; not dreaming what it meant to marry and be a widow. Thus she sat : her brain throbbing under the pressure of questionings : her dry eyes piercing the deepening dusk, with steely glitter. The children had come back from the gate, and sat talking softly on the threshold. Every now and then Clementine looked over at her mother, with an unchildlike anxiety in her face. Benny kept his eyes turned toward the street, and at last he sprang up, crying :

“She ! I knew she’d come back : there she is now.”

The children all sprang up, and ran with cries of joy, and brought Nora in. She covered them with caresses, mingled with sobs.

“You ain’t going off, are you, Nora ?” said Benny.

“Not if I can help it, honey, I tell ye—”

She came on into the room where Hortense sat, just as she had left her ; a dark outline, with the snowy drift of her baby’s dress at her feet, where it had fallen, as she had changed it for his night gown, an hour ago.

The girl threw her bag into a corner, and impulsively dropped on her knees beside her mistress, clasping her and the baby in her arms, and cried :

"I won't go, so there! Don't you say a word: what do I care for the dirty money? You need me: I'm going to stay: how ever'll you take care of the young uns alone?"

The same question again, and it brought no answer with it: unless, indeed, it meant that she should live by that for which she paid nothing: and against that she rebelled.

She lifted her hand, and laid it on Nora's broad shoulder, and was silent.

"So that settles it, mum; an' I think we'll have a little light on the subject: an' I'll get the children's beds ready."

"No, no, Nora!" Mrs. Graham found voice to say. "Nothing has happened to change circumstances. I need many things that I can't have, you among them. I must learn to do without them all. The children must learn to put themselves to bed, and may just as well begin now."

"O mamma!" remonstrated Benny.

"Hush!" sighed Clementine, putting her arm about the little brother, "don't make things hard for mamma."

"Thank you, Clement, dear:" said her mother. "And now, Nora, go, like a good girl. Come and see us as often as you can afford it: but you must get work somewhere, of course. I shall never forget how good and kind you have been: but now, please, as Clementine says, don't make it any harder for me."

"I wouldn't do that for nothin':" sobbed Nora; "but O—I don't want to go till—till at least till you

cry. You haint shed one tear : your eyes is that hot an' burnin' : an' your heart will—O—O—" Her whole frame shook, and her sobbing hindered the word

Mrs. Graham sat very still, while Nora wept upon her knees. The children huddled close together, hushed with awe. The baby slept. At last she spoke, laying her hand on Nora's head.

"Well, Nora:" she said, "I'm afraid you would wait for ever, then. I feel as if I should never have a tear to shed again : may be that is another of the luxuries I must go without. And now, it is getting dark : there will be no moon : it will be lonesome for you going up the hill."

Nora arose : stood a moment, then went into the other room and closed the door behind her. She found her way to a trunk, which she opened. She had packed it, and knew how to get at its contents in the dark. She took out something, which she carried across the room, and laid on a little table behind the door. This done, she went back, and simply saying,

"Good-by,—good-by," went out.

Nora was a devout woman ; born and bred a Catholic ; but having learned the way of faith, she was able now, after she had done all she could, to stand by this little group of the widow and the fatherless, to rest. She found, as she went home, the sweet flavor of the pure and undefiled religion in her soul ; and yet she would not have known how to tell it out, if her life had depended on it.

The dark came in, and filled the two little rooms ;

and for the first time in her life, Hortense Graham sat under its wing of ill-omen, alone, and was afraid. She had never known that she was timid ; but now, strange terrors haunted her, as she went about putting the children to bed. They, poor things, were too weary to lie awake, to keep her company. Clementine tried, in her thoughtful consciousness of her mother's need ; but the strain of the day had been heavy ; and kindly nature would not suffer the child to lie awake burdened ; so she fell quickly asleep, even while she watched. Hortense barred the windows and doors, as securely as she could, and sat down near the sleeping children. Baby Charley was in his crib, and the other three in mother's bed together. She had a tiny lamp that could not consume much oil if it tried : a relic of the sick room : this cast a pale ghostly light in a little circle, in the outer rim of which she noticed her old well-worn Bible, the same which Charley had carried so long, and marked, and annotated, and out of which so many wondrous lessons had been learned, lying open, on the little stand behind the door. She wondered at it : for she remembered that she had not taken it in her hand since she read to her husband from it, the day before he went away. She also remembered that she had not prayed ; that the children had not been gathered together once in the old-fashioned way, since that day. The family altar had been buried in her husband's grave. Her faith, benumbed, had held her limp wings drooping, and she had been falling—falling—falling, into a depth so dark and fearful, that she was filled with amazement and horror. She sat

looking at the open Book from across the room for a moment, thinking these thoughts; then she got up, and began to walk back and forth—toward—then, away from it. Aunt Gracia's teachings came flocking to her mind, like doves to their windows. The old talks with her husband: the old experiences—the promises. These seemed like fragments of a romance that she had heard or read, as she still walked to and fro.

The Book: that was more wonderful than any of it, just now. How came it there? And why? Then she remembered Nora's visit to the room, just before she left. It must be her work. Dear, untutored Nora. Clinging with strange tenacity to the old forms in which her childhood had been swaddled: yet she knew where one ought to go for help in extremes, and had expressed her idea of things, in a way that was thoroughly understood. Hortense, the refined, cultivated, Christian woman, was rebuked, chastened, by this behindhand of her servant. She stopped her walk, with her face to the Book; then slowly approached it, took it up, and began turning the leaves; the old, dear leaves, written all over the margins, by the precious hands folded away forever. She was deeply touched, but not yet softened. Memories would not melt her heart, they only hardened it. Reflection was bitter: and the sternness on her face deepened. She turned along to the Epistle of John; to the old text, about which so much interest clustered. She read: "As He is, so are we in this world."

"Ah, but He never had a sorrow like this. He

never saw any one die that He could not bring back to life, if He wanted to. He loved Lazarus: and wept, when He knew he was dead: but went right over to the grave and bade him come forth, and he came. Jesus wanted him alive: He could not bear to have him dead: so He had him, in spite of four days dead, just as He wanted him, alive and well. O, if I could be in this world as He was then, I should think it meant something. Charley! Charley! Dearer to me than Lazarus could be to Jesus: come forth! I need you more than He needed Lazarus; for He didn't have four helpless little children to feed: and He could have made bread out of stones, if He had."

She stood, holding the Book, while that look of hard despair deepened and darkened. Infinite Pity, nursing its wounded sparrows, must have been moved by it.

At length, carelessly thumbing the leaves, her eyes were arrested by a few words that seemed to be alive, and reach out after her attention. She could but be detained a moment, by that subtile something, that had made itself felt on her. So she tarried, holding the leaf half turned, and read in the dim light:

"For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose."

She knew the end of it from the beginning, for the words were very old, but the effect which they made upon her was new.

"Who knows that?" she cried, aloud. "I ought

to know it if anybody does, or ever did. Paul? Yes, it was he. He knew many things, but we—who is we?”

She began running eye and finger up the chapter: catching at words here and there, as a climber might at projections for hands and feet.

“Saints: groanings which cannot be uttered: Infirmities: patient waiting for it: Hope: redemption of the body: Creation groaneth: creature: glory which shall be revealed—that’s what Charley saw: Joint heirs with Christ. I remember now what Aunt Gracia said about that, that day so long ago: Children: Father—Our Father which art in heaven, of course: As many as are led by the spirit of God they are the sons of God.”

She read it aloud this way, and then read it as written, all back, down to the “All things work together for good.”

“I see,” she said. “We, means the children of God. I might have known that at first sight. Am I one of them? ’Fraid I haven’t acted much as though I had any Father, but father Date. That’s what Philip said Maurice Fletcher expected. I’ve met the expectation of unbelief: and yet I am His child. I will not have it any other way. I will not be anybody else’s child. O, my Father: out of the depths I have not cried unto Thee: but have murmured and found fault—forgive me. . . . Nothing can be left out of this ‘all things.’ That takes in even this, all this horror of desolation about me: but what good can such things do anybody? . . . O, I see! Make me run in out of the dark, into the

place where light and love is ; just like my little ones do. Work together for good—to them that love God. Do I love Him ? That's my part to do. O, God : if my Charley hides you just now, forgive me : I do love Thee. . . . Fearful, unbelieving, O ye of little faith—it is I, be not afraid. . . . Do folks mourn about things that they know are working for their good ? No ! no ! I'm afraid I've been an infidel, as bad as Horace or Mr. Fletcher. . . . Lord, I do believe ; help Thou my unbelief."

Her breast heaved, a sob broke forth : tears, blessed tears, the very first to moisten her stony grief, gushed over her hot eyeballs, and bathed the hectic of her cheeks. She clasped the Book tightly, turned the open page up against her breast, with her palms pressed upon it, and in the restless tumult of the tempest that had burst upon her, walked back and forth. The sound of her weeping filled the house ; and always, through after life, it echoed in her memory, like the far away roar of a tornado. The long agony and fever of her pain, must cool itself in rivers of waters. The struggle up out of the valley of death, into which she would follow her beloved, as though she could not trust him with the Good Shepherd ; and from whence she thought she must return alone, was terrible. She had not recognized the " Lover of her soul." She had been blind, slow of faith, not believing, when He said, " I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." She had nearly strangled, in the dense atmosphere of her sorrow, before she would allow herself to be led out.

Time passed unheeded, as she walked ; tossed up and down by the passion of her woe.

At last she became conscious of a tugging at her skirt. She stood still and looked down. At her side tottered a little white-robed figure, while a pitiful face looked up at her.

“Clementine !” she cried.

“O mamma, don’t ! don’t cry any more, mamma.”

“Clementine, my child !”

“I’m so tired, mamma : take me : don’t cry.”

She bent over and opened her arms, to take the child. The Book fell on its face to the floor. She sat down, and cuddled her close, and broke forth into wilder crying.

“Won’t you stop, mamma, please. I think you’ve cried enough, now :” and the child lifted her night gown to wipe the tears, that were falling on her face ; and almost in the act fell asleep.

She rocked her child and wept on.

The clock struck two.

“So late ! How long I must have been—so. I am tired—but rested—thank God !”

She pressed her hand to her eyes.

“Dear little Clem ! papa’s little house-mother. How long has she been up, I wonder, trying to keep step to my sorrow. Dear little feet !”

She laid her lips down on the tiny instep. Her tears fell again : flowing down over the delicate limbs, but the voice of her wailing had fallen down the scale, into soft drawn sobbing. Sobs expired in sighs, and after a while a wondrous calm succeeded. The breathing of the children vibrated through the

room, and as she listened and looked at their faces, peace touched the grief-worn cheek, and brought the forerunner of a smile.

The baby stirred. She arose and laid Clementine on the bed, and took the baby; giving him the care he needed, and placed him in his crib. She picked up the Book: laid it on the stand: disrobed: extinguished the lamp: and under the cover of the darkness, which now seemed but the drapery of His glory, laid herself down beside her children.

She slept and dreamed. She and her children were together, in some city that she knew belonged to the kingdom of heaven. This city was cut off, and besieged on all sides, by the enemies of the King. They were objects of hatred, because they belonged to Him. A mighty army sat at the gates; a strange, ill-conditioned host, but well drilled, and invincible, under a great leader. There were crawling things, with demon heads, and dragon tails; mounted things, with coals of fire shining through the eye-sockets, in the visors they wore: their names were on their foreheads: She read them and trembled. There was Want, Desolation, Hunger, Thirst, Ignorance, Crime, Slander with its tongue all afoam, everything her soul had ever feared, and Death, on a rampant steed led them all. In his hand he flaunted the torn certificate of her marriage; he had annulled that, and left her with only her children unfathered, to be a shame and reproach. The fear and distress of the evening before, pressed in upon her heart, until it seemed bursting with agony. She lifted her hands and eyes, in a convulsive effort to lay hold of

help; and Nora stood before her, with the Book in her hand. The open page was toward her, and she read the old words, "For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose."

"Are you called?" asked Nora.

"I dare not say: I am afraid."

"Well: do you love Him?"

"I do, indeed I do!"

"That amounts to the same thing."

"O! Then I shall dare say yes."

"All right!" and Nora's dream-face glowed.

"Then look:" she cried, pointing to the besiegers, "and see how they work together."

Hortense lifted her eyes. A strong hand and arm, clothed with a flowing sleeve of light, grasping a WORD as if it were a sword, was thrust out, just before the advancing column of her enemies. As she looked, and wondered, the WORD in the hand smote the leader and began to bind him, and all his host, with a ball and chain, forged of other words, like the sword, and drove them out, a chain-gang, to work on a way that was to be cast up for her, and her children, from the gates of this little city, the King's City. And all the while a great chorus of voices falling like chimes from the sky, sang, "I shall not want: The desolate hath an husband: I am thy husband; blessed are they that hunger and thirst: we know; we know: whiter than snow: hide thee from the strife of tongues: Death and Hell are slain for evermore."

Ten thousand voices told the wondrous song, over and

over, set to martial movement, and the creeping things were all obliged to time their writhings to its exultant measures. At the end of the Way, the entrance to the Capital of the Kingdom shone white, in the far distance. The glory of it held her vision. It grew upon her, and seemed drawing her whole being toward it. Suddenly a hand, a human hand, was thrust out of the midst of it. She knew it: it was Charles Graham's, and it beckoned. She sprang to go to him, but was held back by the grasp of her children on her dress. Then she noticed that between her and him there were deep defiles that must be filled: mountains that must be levelled; crooked places to be made straight; and the Hand holding the Word had driven *all things* out to work, that this should be done, and a highway be cast up for her.

"Do you see?" asked Nora.

"I see. Then those things cannot get in here to us?"

"Those evil things?" and Nora's tone was full of surprise at the idea. "Never! Did you suppose they could come in to any of the Heavenly Places? They can't touch you, if you stay in."

"Stay in? Where?"

"Why! inside the walls, of course."

"What walls?"

"Can't you read? Look up and see."

"She looked up, and noticed that on every stone of the wall was hewn one word:

"Obedience."

"I will stay in," she said.

"Then: Peace I leave with you, My peace I give

unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Arise, let us go hence."

It was the Book that spake, and instead of Nora's hand that held it, it was One that had been pierced.

"Where shall we go?" she asked.

"To our work. Why stand ye here all the day idle? Go work in My vineyard: and lo, I am with you alway."

She awoke. The morning sun filled the room. Her first thought was of the glory Charley saw. She turned her eyes: Clementine was standing beside the bed with the baby in her arms: a look of premature anxiety in her face.

Hortense smiled. The child seemed more surprised than as though she had wept again. She had forgotten what to do with her mother's smile. Hortense reached out her arms, and clasped the little "house-mother" and the baby closely to her.

"Mamma is better, darling," she said. "I shall never be like that again. God is near us. He is good. We need not be afraid. We shall all go to papa, when our work is done, and all things do work together for our good. We shall be safe, and comfortable all the way."

A tremulous sigh of relief heaved the little girl's breast, and she cried:

"O, I am so glad! I thought you had forgotten that part of it."

CHAPTER XXVII.

ALL the world thought Hortense Graham was helpless with her four little children, and "scant resources," but she was not. All the world chuckled a little, behind its mask of pity, that the widow of so good a Christian should be left to almost certain beggary: that such a church light as she had been, should be set at last in a broken candlestick. But that was because all the world was wanting in proof of the surety of His word, who is the Father of the fatherless, and the God of the widow.

She ceased to ask how she could bring up her children alone, for the word of the Lord, which the Book spake in her dream, remained with her.

"It is Heavenly Father and I, these days," she used to say, whenever her needs pressed upon her, and she was compelled to seek counsel. Of course she found the old habit of "asking Charley," a hard one to break. And she often found her eyes aching for the sight of the dear familiar face and form, in the counsels of her home, not being accustomed yet to the sight of the invisible. The hopelessly vacant place, was a desert that did not bloom yet; but she did begin to get acquainted with the Comforter; and to find His real abiding presence, always ready

to answer with His greater strength and truer wisdom, to the cry of her soul.

She had to accustom herself to new things everywhere, inside the cheap house, and outside in the cheap neighbors.

Queer neighbors they were: the McGuire's among them. Mrs. McGuire knew what was becoming toward a new resident. So soon after Mrs. Graham had got settled in her new house, she called. She came in state, in a most surprising toilet.

Before the Book spoke to her, Hortense Graham would have made this woman feel the difference between them; but after the first instant of consternation, for Christ's sake, for His vineyard's sake, for the sake of womanhood, she was so gracious, that from that time Mrs. McGuire "ran in" just as she was, "neighborly like," at all hours. And another thing that caused Hortense's flesh to creep: Bridget began to make friends with Clementine.

One morning, as Hortense was giving little Charley his bath, he smiling in a quiet, pensive way, under her caressing touches, as was his fashion, Mrs. McGuire came in the back way, unannounced.

"Good morning, Mrs. McGuire," said Hortense, pleasantly, although she was a little annoyed. "You see I am occupied: excuse me, please, and take a seat."

"'Scusable, Miss Graham, I'm sure. You'd be 'scusable for anything, 's I said to Dennis, but marryin' agin: and thet ye'd be a blamed fool fur doin'! But ye will: ye're good lookin'; an' women is fools: so's men, fur thet matter. Yit nobody

can't blame a man fur gittin' a good-looking woman, what knows how tur tek keer o' things, 's I knows on: but I say when a woman's got shet o' one stick o' a man, she's a blamed fool fur gittin' another: but we all does."

"Clementine, dear," Mrs. Graham's voice had a peculiar quality in it: "will you please close the door?"

Clementine, with her eyes wide open upon their caller, came and reluctantly drew the door to, between the room where she was busy with her part of the work, and the one where her mother sat.

Mrs. Graham's first impulse had been to indignantly resent these offensive words: but suddenly, again, she thought of the vineyard, to which the Book sent her, and about, "As He is so are we." "What would Christ do with this woman?" That kept her still: so she had to listen as Mrs. McGuire went on. This thought came to help her bear the foul odor of this woman's talk:

"I ought to know what she thinks about, if I'm going to be in His place to her: I can't read her heart, as He could; so I must let her read it out loud to me."

Mrs. McGuire went on:

"Dennis, that's my last man--the first one was killed in the war"—

"O!" and Hortense looked up at her.

"Yes, he was: an' a tough time I had on't, I tell ye: what with the boys, two on 'em, an' the slow ways the guv'nment had 'bout the pensions. If I'd a knowd I wus a goin' to get it sometime, I think I'd

a held out, and let Dennis McGuire go 'n shoot hisself: he said he would 'f I didn't marry him: the loon! 'n I thought I'd niver get a cent for poor Dany, from the flag he died fur, 'n it wus awful hard washin' seven days 'n the week."

"Seven days? On Sunday, Mrs. McGuire?"

"Bless ye! yes. But I did make a difference: I'd wash all the finest and whitest things: baby things: and such. Never a colored rag, or anything for a bad man, 'f I knowd it, on Sunday, 'n it was awful hard. Dennis sed I shouldn't have to wash more'n five or six days, 'f I'd have him; so I up an' did it: I wus a fool; an' got my pay; mostly in the gurrl; Bridget's awful; 'n I don't know what to do with her. But—my boy Larry, named fur his dad: he's a comfort, all I've got, bless him! ye ought to know Larry.

"Well, 's I started to say, Dennis he said yo'd have to git married, cos you niver could take keer o' all these younguns 'thout some man or ruther; but I just warns ye; they'll all talk it; an' some fellow come along that'll make ye b'lieve it: but ye does it to ye'r sorrow. Take in washin', seven days 'n the week: scrub with yer nose to the floor; wear yer knuckles to the bone: and hump yer back like a camul: but don't ye marry agin': that's my advice. But ye'll take it like a leddy, 's ye is, 'n then go 'n do it all the same; an' I'm sorry fur ye; I am, there."

The woman's voice was full of sympathetic quavers; and Hortense had been saying to herself,

"According to her intention, shall her words be

to me ;” so when Mrs. McGuire paused, she answered,

“Thank you : your advice is good. I don’t believe I shall be left to such a terrible necessity. I shall lack nothing. I shall be able to do anything that has to be done.”

“Well : mebby ye will. But ye’r hands is full, ’n they don’t look over strong.”

“Yes ? but if I am likely to drop anything, God’s hand will catch it, and hold it for me.”

Mrs. McGuire crossed herself, and sat silent a moment, her great coarse hands in her lap : and seemed to be watching the bath, and the sweet content of the little one. And its crowing, and smiling, and smacking on its pearly fist, brought a smile to her sensual face, as she answered reflectively,

“I—don’t—know much ’bout that. Seems like He’s got his hands so full a’ready, that He’s had ter let a good many things drop as ’tis. Guess what we can’t hold on to ourselves, will have ter go by the board.”

“I should be helpless if that was so, Mrs. McGuire, but I know who is my Helper.”

“Well, ’f yer do, ’t’s all right : an’ mebby, ’s Dennis sed, there’s more ’n we knows of, behind yees. But things looks mighty like though ye hadn’t much more ’n any other poor woman, what’s left ’thout nothin’, but a back load o’ young uns. ’Twon’t be easy fur ye : all this change, ’f ye do talk brave. I likes ye fur that, though : I do. I likes grit. Some on ’em was sayin’ how glad they wus, that the sleek lookin’ factory man’s widder had to come down to

't, after all. But I ain't glad to see no woman have to come down to the hard places: an' the little gurr'l, the boys ken tek keer o' their selves, only the pimpin one: I always feels toward him 's if he ware a gurr'l; wonderful pimpin 's that Philip o' yer'n. But Ben, he kin make his way: such fellows always light on their feet, no matter what throws 'em.

"That's an awful foin dress fur sich a place:" and she took the hem of the baby's dress, which Hortense was just fastening on him, in her red fingers. "But 'course yes didn't 'spose he'd have ter wear it in sich a place."

Hortense felt a little choking in her throat, but answered:

"I am going to make some little colored slips right away."

"He'll look mighty cute in 'em: but he aint lookin' strong: he's a summer bird, he is—"

Hortense looked up quickly.

"Why: what do you mean by that?"

"Anybody kin see, but his own mother, o' course: 'taint in nature she should, I 'spose; but that kind never stays after frost comes. Better let me take thet little gown and do it my Sunday style, an' lay it away agin ye wants it."

Hortense felt her cheek grow cold: a deadly faintness showed itself on her face and in her eyes.

"Don't, don't, dear heart! I'm a rough old fool! There," and Mrs. McGuire took a handful of water and threw it into her face. "There! I guess ye'll feel better; don't take anything I said to heart, poor thing. Mebbe after all he's a snow bird; he's

white enough. I hope he is, I declare to goodness I do, if he is a boy."

Hortense had quickly rallied from the shock of Mrs. McGuire's rough-shod way of walking over her heart-strings, and again took up her cross, and answered:

"Thank you, Mrs. McGuire, for your kind feelings for me. I have to learn to do the best I can with things as they come."

She felt that she could not say more now. She wished Mrs. McGuire would go; she hurt her; yet she was a poor, ignorant creature, and here was, perhaps, her chance to carry into practice the beautiful lessons that her life with Charley and the Book had taught her. Again came the question, "what would HE do with this woman if HE were here?" It took but the natural pause of a "full stop," for this to turn itself in her mind, and quicken her heart, so that she could go on.

"And with God's help I can do it."

"Ye seem to make a good deal o' that."

"Of what?"

"O' HIS help," and she crossed herself again.

"Yes, of course. I could do nothing without it. HE is all I have, you know: nobody but God, and these little folks, and—"

"Ah, well! 'T's awful hard, any way ye fix it. We'd better all be dead; blessed be nothin' an' nobody, sez I."

"Yes, if God is left out," said Hortense, earnestly; "but with Him, it's all blessed; and I shall not find

it harder than I can bear, with Him to help me, as He has promised."

"Well, all I've got to say, is, fools an' young uns is happy, cos they don't know nothin'; but I don't understand ye's: fur ye're neither a fool or a child. It's best, o' course, to put a bold face on, an' grit ye'r teeth, and go through; but I'm awful sorry fur ye; thet's what makes me run in so often; thet, an' to see the little primrose whiten," and she touched her red lips to the baby's cheek. "I thinks—thinks, sez I, she'll need chirkin', an' I'd like to see thet sweet baby once more, so I runs in; but my wash water is bilin' by this time, n' I must trot back."

"I really thank you for your kind heart, Mrs. McGuire."

And Hortense meant it. Her eyes were misty, and she arose and held out her hand.

"There now, I knew there was a wet spot in yer feelin's, if ye did talk brave. Ye're a thousand times welcome, poor child, I'm sure. An' now I'll ask fur what I kum fur. I wants to do ye're washin'; 'twon't be much put in t' heap; an' I said, sez I to Dennis, if yes will help old Pat McGoon hould down thut old drygoods box, front o' Murry's saloon, I'm goin' to help the widder Graham 'th her washin', see 'f I don't."

Hortense stood amazed.

"Don't think I'm afther it for pay: it's cos ye're a woman alone 's I wus once; and fur the little bird, with its wings a growin'; I haint nobody to help me, so let me do this fur yees."

Hortense at first thought this a strange reason to

give ; but in a second she saw what the woman meant, and remembered the words of the Book, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Her pride rebelled ; but as she read the heart of the woman in her face, she dare not refuse, any more than if she had asked to borrow a cup of flour : it was the same thing. So she said :

"Mrs. McGuire, I think I understand you : you will do this because—because—"

"Cos we're both women : and you've got the baby an' I haint. Mine's growd up to be : well, Larry—he's kind to his ole mother, he is : but I'll do it cos I want to ; an 'twill make me feel better when I look over this way : and when I go to bed an' think I may die fore mornin', just as my sister Nance died : just my age."

The soiled clothing was gathered together ; and Mrs. McGuire went out with the bundle in her arm, and a softer look in her face.

"I'll be able to do something in return, I know," said Hortense. "It's not a real business way ; but a womanly way after all ; and it does me good, I hardly know why, but I do feel that this is right. It's the mother in her that craved this to do, the mother in me that can allow it. Motherhood is wonderfully broad : broader than even Christianity : and God is in it : what a platform for Him to work on."

As Hortense Graham went about her work, and talked with the children of the McGuire's, and the neighborhood in general, suddenly Bessie Fletcher came into her mind. She recalled the conversation with Mrs. Sloan about her, and began to long to

know how they were getting on. She had been so incensed at Maurice Fletcher for his treatment of Hollis, that she felt that she never wanted to see him again : but now that was all gone. The stronger and truer spirit within her, had crowded out that other, which was begotten of unbelief. But, desire as she might, to learn about them, she had no means at present. She was bound to her little nest, and could only think of them with tender interest, and pray for them.

The Elmwood friends came often, and always brought help and comfort. Aunt Hittie sent hers in the shape of a little jar of butter, or a pan of cookies for the children, or a pair of chickens, beside eggs and milk. Nora came : at first she expected to find imperative necessity for her strong and willing hands, in putting things to rights ; and was not a little nonplussed to see everything in order, and comfort, and a look of contentment in the faces of mother and children. This was so out of harmony with her expectations, and with the circumstances, that Nora could not seem to understand it.

Mrs. Graham noticed this the first time she came, so she led her to the place where the Book lay always open, as she had left it, and said,

“ That did it, Nora. I am ashamed that I acted like an infidel : your good Christian heart, under God, saved me.”

She drew the girl to her, and kissed her, for the first time. Nora lifted her apron to her face and fell to sobbing : but was comforted.

After this, as opportunity afforded, she ran in, and

now and then did manage to find some unfinished work, which she could do, and in the doing, be herself warmed and fed.

Mrs. Graham felt an urgent necessity that she should look about for something that she could do to give her an income, but was compelled to ask herself, every time, "when could I do it?" for she had no leisure.

Whether it was because she really ought to be doing more, and could not, with present duties, whether her hands were really too full, so that she could not hold all her treasures safely, or because the shock of his advent into the world under the dark shadow of death was too much for the bright spirit, or he had inherited a frail tenure of life from the soldier with the hidden wound—however it was, it was sure that the baby's little flesh grew more and more transparent; the veins lay under the waxy skin like threads of silken azure; the dark eyes grew more and more wise; his smile more and more pensive, day-by-day; until all who looked upon him, knew him for a summer bird whose flitting time was near. A pale wax flower—a ripening primrose, as Mrs. McGuire had said. He had never really cried: coming early to answer every look and word with a smile and a coo; sleeping, waking, playing his fingers, as if sweeping harp strings, with his arms lifted above his face, and his little feet fluttering in his long clothes, as if keeping time to music that no one heard but he.

Hortense drank in his supernatural beauty, day-by-day, wonderingly; handling the little limbs,

bathing and clothing the sweet flesh, as "Mary, mother of God," might have done, had she known about her baby, all that Hortense, looking back over eighteen centuries of His developed glory, did.

Little Clementine could hardly let him out of her arms, worshipping the shrine which but thinly veiled the seraphic presence within. Philip would steal in and bend over him ; take his waxy fingers and compare them with his own. Once he asked :

"Mamma, was I any smaller than baby ?"

"At his age, dear ?"

"Yes, that's what I meant."

"I think not ; about the same size."

Philip kissed him then, and went out as if to go off alone somewhere.

Benny had too much growing to do, to hang about the crib ; but he brought the water for his bath, and carried it away ; moved the crib around into the sun ; and carried the little one out into the yard for his daily airing.

Baby knew them all ; took with delight the kisses, caresses, and tending that was his share in life. He always had an extra note to his cooing, when he heard Mrs. McGuire's voice, and fluttered his hands and feet if she came in sight, and was contented to lie upon her ample breast ; nor did he scorn to lie on the lounge in her wash-room, and tune his harp, and tell off the measures with his feet. Even Bridget had pressed warm kisses on his innocent lips, unrebuked ; and who knows but she was the better for it. One evening he lay on his mother's knees. She had held him nearly all day : not because he asked it in

any way, or complained if left alone ; but because, first, Mrs. McGuire had returned three times to look at him again, after she had started home from her early call. She always came, these days, as soon as the little household were up. And then, because something drew her heart out to him, so that she could not lay him down, she carried him wherever she went about the house ; or sat gazing upon, and wondering at his strange, unearthly beauty. And as she looked, just as the sun sank low in the west, and its light streamed into the window, his eyes flashed up with a look of joyful recognition, the fingers fluttered and dropped at his side, the eyelids quivered a moment, the lips opened as if to speak, and—remained fixed. Nothing changed after that, as long as they saw him.

Hortense cried out in her surprise, and then sat down dumb with amazement.

What could it mean? Did heaven close her about so near, that with no wind to toss it, her nest might empty itself into it, like this ?

There had been no illness: nothing but such cool sweetness of life, as one could never weary of. How could it end like this?

End ?

She stood just a minute, and thought: looked up, and smiled, as she seemed again to see the hand she knew so well, beckoning from the midst of the Eternal glory.

She sent for Doctor Cleives, however, just to see if indeed there was no staying the little life: and then set herself to comfort the children, who could not let him go without crying after him.

"The father's been calling him, poor dear ! and he had to go," said Mrs. McGuire. "I could see it all along," and she brought the dainty dress fresh from the irons.

"It's bether so," said Nora, as she took the white garments to put them on the little form.

"She'll not have to make the colored slips now," added Mrs. McGuire. "An' I never could bear the idea: 'twould a' looked like a lily a blowin' out o' mullin."

The farm people came, bringing white roses and myrtle, with which to line the tiny casket : and as the baby form lay in the midst, death was made to appear very improvident. How could it be economy, to hide anything like that away in the dark, to decay ? You would have felt as you do when a lily that you have spent much care upon, has blossomed, and is prematurely withered. Only the lily you could keep, even if it did fade, and dry to a crisp : but this you could not keep.

Hortense had to take Clementine away from the cold mockery of its rigid stillness. She could not bear the lips that would not open on the toothless pink gums : and the expressive tongue that refused to pipe and coo at her call. The little hands that had ceased to flutter, hurt her as the heaviest blows could not have done. What could she do without this sweet dear little life ? She could not let the grave have her baby.

But it had to be. Borne of four little girls in white, it was carried in through the cemetery gate, and laid away at the feet of all that the grave could hold of Charles Graham.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BESSIE FLETCHER spent such a night as she had never known before, following the experiences of that day and evening. She threw herself down upon her narrow bed, and cried bitterly, angrily, and long.

She had no doubt but her father had come in and stolen that money, and the place which should have been filled with a daughter's tender, confiding love, was seething like a cauldron of acid and alkali. She felt that she could almost tear him to pieces, if she could find him now: only her mother had pleaded for him. She fell to wondering what her mother would say now; and if she could love him one bit. Once she got up to go and ask her, but then be-thought herself that it would not add anything to her rest, and crept back into bed. Then she thought about Henry Griffin.

"I was a fool!" she said to herself. "Didn't I know that any man that would pretend to like Fletcher's girl, would be a scamp! And yet," pleaded a voice within, "don't I need a dress? It's all so: I aint fit to go out to the street: I don't know 's he was to blame; but he ought to 'a known better 'n to offer me that."

She nursed her wrath and hate for all the world, and sorrow and pity for the sick little mother, and the children; and turned her brain inside out for plans, until morning. All the Sabbath day the same process went on. Harley did not come home. Junietta and Marianna were out all day, but she did manage to keep the little ones in. She had food enough for several days, so that they were in a measure comfortable, if they were in trouble.

Madeline was more ill than usual. Bessie spent the day in nursing her, and cooking up the supplies. She felt obliged to modify her culinary plans, not knowing when anything more would come into the house; yet with the good things at hand, and her natural gifts and acquired skill, she brought forth results which kept Susie and Sadie in a state of delectation all day, and made it easy to keep them in.

Maurice Fletcher did not come home until Monday night, supper time. Then he entered the house in a new mood, and an unusual frame of mind. He had, however, a stormy reception, in spite of Madeline's plea in his behalf.

As soon as he opened the door, Bessie called out to him:

"Well, you think you did it, don't you? But any sneak thief could ha' done that."

For once Maurice did not understand, for once he was falsely accused, and felt it.

"Bess," he said, "generally when you scold, I deserve it so well that I don't need to ask any questions; but this time I don't know what you mean about a sneak thief. I never stole anything in my

life, whatever else I've done, and nobody ever said thief to me before—supposing you did it now.”

It was Bessie's turn to be amazed. She had never heard her father say as much in explanation, or extenuation of anything he did. But she was not to be silenced, even by such unusual amiability on his part.

“Stole!” she said. “Well, if you never did before, you did this time. It was just as much stealing as though you had taken it from the factory safe.”

Fletcher was thoroughly mystified.

“Bessie,” he said, “I declare I don't know what you're talking about.”

“O, you get out! I'm talking about that seventy-five dollars you took out o' mamma's bed, Saturday night.”

“Seventy-five dollars! Is it gone, Bessie?”

“Gone? You know—of course it's gone, like all the rest.”

“This is the first I knew about it, if it is gone: if anybody stole it, it wasn't me.”

Bessie blew a spiteful, contemptuous reply into his face. He went on:

“You may ask Hollis Ellenwood. I stayed with him all night, and all day yesterday, and sat up with Graham all night.”

“You did? A likely story.”

“And I haven't drank a drop: and I worked all day; and now I want some supper. I've eaten precious little to-day. I thought, since you had the money, I'd get something this time.”

Bessie stood and regarded him with mingled astonishment, incredulity, and contempt.

"I won't ask Mr. Ellenwood," she said. "I know 'taint so, 'thout askin'—but I s'pose I'll have to get you some supper: but I'll tell you what 'tis, I'm going to go somewhere to get something to do, and just as soon 's I can, I'm going to take mamma 'n the little ones away, an' take care o' them. I've got something to eat now, but it wont last long: and I've given up trying to get anything out o' you: it's too much work. And of course you can go anywhere in the house and take anything, spite o' me, and—"

"Bess: I did not touch that money. I have not seen it: you must ask Hollis. And say, Bess: I'm going to give you my next pay—"

"When you do that, I'll believe you; but you won't have any; you won't stay; you won't have any work."

"Didn't I tell you I'd been to work, to-day? Hollis hasn't told anybody; aint going to; I'm going to work right on: and I'm going to do 's I said just now. Hurry up 'n give me some supper."

He did not wait for anything more, but went on into his wife's room. Madeline Fletcher had heard all that had passed. She caught the reasonable tone in which her husband spoke, and her heart leaped. A poor little foolish loving woman she had been, and still was; having in her heart that which would spring up into sweetness, at the first touch of kindly hope. As he came toward her, she reached out her hand, and said,

"I believe you, Maurice; but I can't think who could have got that money. I was asleep. Bessie had got me such a nice supper: and I was so tired.

She had gone out, and somebody certainly came in, and put their hand under the mattress where she put the money, and got it. I—I didn't—couldn't believe you did it, Maurice."

"I should hope so, Mad'line. I hope I'm not that sort, anyhow. When I give anything, I give it."

He sat down after supper with an old pile of scientific papers : and to his poor wife at least, it seemed like a little lifting of the shadow, to see him propose to spend the evening at home. While he was reading, there suddenly occurred one of those strange acts of memory, by which things forgotten, rush in and crowd out the objects of sight and touch. He was looking at a cut of an improved locomotive engine, when there came to him with a shock that made him drop his paper, the scene of Saturday night in "The Lamb's Fold." Harley, with his pockets full of money, paying for his drink. He had not thought of this since he had awakened from his drunken sleep, in Hollis' room.

Instantly, he thought he knew who had stolen that money. His boy Harley a thief; and in the saloon : —that place."

"Bess—where's Harley?" he asked, quickly turning and scanning the room.

"I don't know : I don't pretend to keep track o' him."

"When was he home last?"

"Don't know : not since Saturday noon."

"Sure?"

"I tell you I don't keep track o' him ; he may ha' been here when I wasn't."

He relapsed into silence ; picked up his paper, and sat thinking.

Madeline thought, with her heart in her throat again, "How like living it seems to have my husband inquire, and look anxious about my boy. Surely the child needs a father."

And yet she did not dream how much. After a while he looked up and around again.

"And the girls?" he asked.

"Which?" said Bessie, who was mending some things for the little ones.

"All of 'em: don't seem to be any of 'em here since supper."

"The little girls are in bed—June and Annie look after themselves, for all me. They aint ever in."

"Not ever in?"

"No; not till late. Seems to me, you're getting mighty curious 'bout 'em. Maybe you'll be asking next what I'm doing—see;" and she held up a garment, worn to the last thread; "and I'm patching it with these." And she held up a handful of rags. "And you drawin' one hundred dollars every month."

Maurice Fletcher winced.

"Well:" he said, after a minute. "I told you I'd give you my next pay."

"If you do, all right: I should be pretty good to a man that brought me a hundred dollars every month, I tell you."

Maurice had nothing to say. He was in no mood for anything more from her, and every word from him brought two in retort.

He had never been in the state of mind before,

which made even a partial view of the facts about him possible. But the events of the past three days, including that night at Charles Graham's, had made a pause for him, in which to look about. He did not like the view : in fact he was troubled. He sat silent : pondering. At length he said to himself,

“ I'll see about this.”

He took his hat and went out, taking his way directly to the “ Lamb's Fold.”

He walked with energy : something was astir within him, that made him look and walk unlike himself ; more like a father, more like a citizen, more like a man.

He entered the place abruptly, and found a new and more terrible fact awaiting him. Not only boys, but girls, not only some boys and girls, but his own : Harley, Junietta, and Marianna, were in this haunt of sin. He heard their voices in loud laughter, before he had really entered beyond the screen : and when he did take the whole scene in, just as it was, he turned pale and reeled.

“ Hello, pap,” cried Harley.

The bartender was not long in reading the face of Fletcher. It told a different story from before. There was also somewhat of strength in it. There was wrath at least, and he concluded that the children should get out at once. So he came over the bar with a bound, and swinging his arms, cried,

“ Here, you young scalawags : get out o' this !
“ Spose I'm going to have this hullabaloo ! Get out ! 'scat ! ”

He jerked a door open, and they tumbled out into the night, like overgrown rats.

"Pity folks can't keep their young uns at home:" he muttered. "Anything I can do for you, sir?"

The suddenness of the change, had swept everything before it. The children hushed, and vanished: and Fletcher stood amazed.

"Anything, sir? something to drink?" said the bar-tender, rubbing his hands.

"No!" with an oath. "You wretch! I'll send the police after you."

"Ah! yes? for why? All quiet as the meetin' house here. If folks 'd only keep their brats to home 'twould save us lots o' trouble. I think I'll begin to talk perlice. Some on 'em ought to be locked up. That June bug, now: she that was a dancing, and kickin' round. She's a tough."

Fletcher hastened out, slamming the door behind him. He looked along the street, turned into the alley, the same place where he had been picked up on Saturday night, only he did not know it; went around the block, but discovered no trace of the children. He stopped and stood on a corner near by, thinking they might come back. But they had evidently gone for this time to some other haunt, or possibly his children had gone home. Of course they did generally go home at night. He began to walk in that direction, his eyes on the lookout. He thought he had never seen so many boys and girls as he saw that night on the street. He, at least, had never thought about it before. They were about the doors of all public places, and as he came to a low variety theatre, he saw a dense crowd of youths and children about the entrance, on the sidewalk, jostling

and talking as loudly as the presence of a blue uniform, with a club and star, would permit. He stood and watched the surging, shifting throng, but was not rewarded by any sight of his own.

He thought once that he would go to the police office. But annoyed and troubled as he was, he was not yet thoroughly enough alarmed, or had not sufficient sensibility to make this seem necessary. He did not want his children to do this way—and yet!

He walked on until the beautiful outline of Union Hall arose before him. It was lighted, and the voice of singing issued from it. He stopped and listened a moment, and thought about John Mark, Charles Graham, and Hollis. He was still on the watch. As Hollis said to Annie, lying in wait for a life.

He had been profoundly moved by what he saw and heard the night before; and by the fact that Hollis had treated him all day as though he did not in any way connect him with it. Hollis had stood the test, as he would not have believed any man could.

“But,” reasoned Fletcher, “the fact that Annie Dayton was in the house, and Charles Graham dying; and that I was not far off, would all have an influence against me. Such things would hold a man like Hollis. To get a real proof of the thing, I must take him sometime when things go wrong: when he’s got the blues. If everything would turn against him, now, and he be feeling all down in the mouth; and I could get some liquor into him, and

have plenty at hand, and he be all alone, then, nobody nor nothin' could save him. He'd go on to 't sure 's he's a livin' man. 'F he didn't, then I'd know he was helped by some power greater 'n any man, who knew how to get inside o' him, and hold him, in spite o' himself."

He began to make plans for such a trial of his soul's cause, in Hollis Ellenwood; and the unusual anxiety for his children was forgotten. He walked the streets cogitating, until he began to feel tired, and then went home and went to bed.

Things went on without much change, other than that Hollis took it upon him to interfere, by some kindly inquiries, in the affairs of this family. He advanced from his own pocket, money on his salary, for Fletcher to pay his grocer, and butcher, and landlord, and get some drygoods for Bessie to make up. This brightened the child's face, softened her voice, and brought a kindly light into her eyes when she looked at her father. She made some dresses for the children and herself, trying to ape the fashion with her cheap stuff, succeeding but poorly, but sufficiently to make her mother smile, and give herself the satisfaction of showing that she at least knew the style, if she could not wear it. She was careful to provide good fare for her father, these days, and tried to make him look more presentable, by brushing his clothes, and sewing the buttons on. She even invested in some shoe blacking, and herself polished his shoes, the very next Sunday morning, before he got up.

Two or three times Fletcher thought he would

attend to Harley and the girls, and see that they stayed in at night. But it was not easy to begin under the circumstances, so they all drifted on in the same dreadful way that leads to death.

Madeline Fletcher began to gather a little physical strength, so that the day that the remains of Charles Graham were borne to the cemetery, she sat up in the old rickety cane chair, and watched the procession from the window. She felt sorry for Mrs. Graham, because she thought,

“If it would hurt me to see Maurice like that, what must it be for her to lose such a husband?”

Fletcher watched the funeral from the street opposite the cottage; followed it by cross ways: came into the cemetery from the opposite direction; and to the grave as the sexton was just taking off his jacket to begin the work of filling it up, after all the rest had gone. He stood and looked on: once he stooped and picked a stone of some size, that was about to roll into the grave, out of a heap of earth, and tossed it away. Then he went and picked it up, and carried it about with him, as he went among the graves.

Strangely solemn thoughts kept him company, and a genuine pity for the widow, softened and humanized his heart.

After that, he kept watch of the Grahams, and when they had moved, he changed his route to and from the factory, so as to pass the place. He was lying in wait now for the faith and hope and strength of Christianity, in the life of this stricken woman. And, as she surmised, he had not found much yet to distinguish her from any well-bred woman of the world.

She was very quiet all the time, in her sorrow, but evidently there was no joy or comfort in it, as far as he could tell by the occasional glimpses he got of her face as he passed; and evidently, she held resentment toward him, or something, for she no longer seemed to recognize him anywhere.

Christian consolation was a queer thing, if it was what Hortense Graham represented it to be, thought Fletcher. But of course he did not know.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AFTER they returned from the place where they left the baby casket, Hortense Graham found something new to do, in comforting the grief-stricken children. Clementine went about with the air of one whose life work had been taken out of her hands. Philip stood at the window and winked hard as he saw Malcolm Sloan go by with the Sloan baby in its cab; and Benny, big, overgrown Benny climbed into his mother's lap, and with his hand on her cheek, said in a minor key,

"I'm all the baby you've got now, mamma, and I'm almost a man."

"Yes, darling: that is so. You'll always have to be mamma's baby, now."

Benny looked anxiously into her face, and after a minute, asked:

"Then you'll want me to stop growing: will you be asking God to let me stay little?"

"No, no, my darling: I want God's own way to be done: and it's His way that you should grow."

"And—Philip?"

"Yes, and Philip."

Philip turned and looked soberly down at his small limbs, and then at Benny.

“And it was God’s way that baby should stop : and die ? ”

Clementine and Philip now both came close for the answer.

“No, indeed.” The tone was bright and glad. “It was His way to give baby a wider place to go on in, and grow up in, to be one of His tall sons.”

“ ’Cause, O—I see—’twa’nt roomy ’nough here for him, was it, mamma ? ’cause he’s got to be very tall.”

“Yes.”

“Maybe ’twon’t be roomy for me either,” he said, reflectively, looking up at the low ceiling. “An’ say, Phil : maybe you’ll be glad bime by ’t you haint got to grow sò much, so’t you can have room ’nough ’thout goin’ where baby had to.”

“But O—mamma !” broke in Clementine, “I don’t know how to bear it : for it seems as if little brother was dead—dead, mamma : not just gone : and papa too. I didn’t think so much about it till to-day, when they opened papa’s grave, and baby was so sweet, to put in there ; and he is dead, mamma, dead ! ”

“But daughter, you must not ; it is not true. He could not die. Don’t you know about what papa said : the part of him that was too quick ? And neither pain nor sickness was ever able to catch up with little Charley. He never had a pain, I guess : he never cried—he just came and stayed until he got ready to go : then smiled, and looked up, and went, before anybody but God knew he was going.”

“And are you glad, mamma ? You almost seem

glad." Clementine's voice had just a little of reproach in it.

"I think I must be, dear: for I have seen the blessedness. We shall all go, soon, to them; and they will never be tired again, or ever lonely, or sad. God's way is best: yes, I am glad."

"And would you be glad if Benny, and all of us should go?"

"My dear child! I would like, if we could go all the rest of the way together, but for any of us to go in through that gate of the grave, will never be to me again what it was."

That evening, after the children had gone to bed, and she sat in the dusk by the open window, rocking to and fro in her low baby chair, Benny slipped out of his nest, and came and climbed upon her lap. She drew him closely, and with his head on her breast rocked on. The moon came up brightly: and somehow involuntarily she began to sing:

"Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly;
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high.
Hide me, O, my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last."

Maurice Fletcher was passing. He heard the singing and stopped to listen. It was surely the voice of Hortense Graham, and in spite of all he had murmured and wondered to himself, he found that he was surprised to hear this sound issue from the house of mourning. For of course it must be a

house of mourning. The widow of Charles Graham should not sing. There could be nothing to make her sing. If she was a Christian, she must mourn like other folks. It was contrary to everything he had said and thought, that she should sing.

He stopped and stood leaning against the fence. He heard the full, triumphant voice, chant :

“The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets
Before we reach the heavenly fields
Or walk the golden streets.”

“We’re marching to Zion,
Beautiful, beautiful Zion,
We’re marching upward to Zion,
The beautiful city of God.”

She sang the hymn through, and the victorious strains filled the listener with awe. He stood as if waiting, for some time after the singing had ceased, and then walked slowly home.

He went directly to his wife’s room, and as he took a chair and tilted it back against the wall, said :

“Madeline, what do you suppose I heard to-night?”

“I’m sure I don’t know,” she answered, in a weary voice. “What was it?”

“The widow Graham giving a public concert.”

“Maurice!”

“Fact! Singing as though she was the happiest woman in the world.”

“Maybe she is,” said Madeline, with a sigh. “But I don’t understand you: where was she? Where were you?”

"I shouldn't consider it much of a compliment to my memory," he went on, ignoring her question, "if my wife should sit and sing like that, and I only a few weeks in my grave."

Madeline Fletcher did not improve the period he made, with any remark, so he went on:

"'Tisn't every woman loses a husband like Charles Graham: she never will again, if she has a dozen."

"A dozen!"

"Why not? Or do you think one such 's enough?"

"One is enough, of course; but do explain about her singing: what did she sing?"

"O, something about a lover of her soul, and marching around, and all such trash."

"Why, Maurice! How can you!" gasped Madeline, under her breath. "She was singing hymns: 'Jesus, lover of my soul,' I know, and 'Marching to Zion,' and I guess she was at home, wasn't she?"

"She don't seem to feel very bad," he went on, "if the baby is dead. She hasn't any call to be singing, with such a man gone into the ground; 'taint hardly respectable; she'll be awfully helpless 'thout Charley, she'll find out, with those children to bring up, and no money, but maybe she was a singing to keep her courage up."

"Well, you can't blame her—poor Hortense."

Madeline liked this new mood of her husband, which made him talk about the outer world. She was quick to feel the touch of a friendly atmosphere. It

would never take much to make her happy. His notice made her bold ; so she went on :

“ But she did not sing to keep her courage up. I know what made her sing. She don’t believe Charley or the baby are lost, but gone to heaven, and—”

“ There now : I know what you’re switching off onto. Strange if I can’t say anything ’thout havin’ such stuff poked in my face,” he answered, sulkily. “ And I know what you’re thinking of.”

“ What ? ” she ventured to ask, timidly.

“ That it may not be so bad a thing, after all, for a woman to have her husband go to heaven.”

“ Maurice ! ”

“ O, you needn’t deny it. Of course you don’t think that of her, though : but you’ve wished you had one in heaven lots o’ times. I’ve seen it when you didn’t know I was looking.”

Madeline began to cry, and Bessie, who had heard it all through the open door, came flying in.

“ There now,” she cried, “ I think you’ve said enough. She had a perfect right to wish she had a husband as fit to go to heaven, as Mrs. Graham’s was, and she ought to have : she deserves it, if any woman does : and you—”

“ Look out, Bess ! I don’t feel like a quarrel to-night,” he said, turning toward the girl, “ so keep still ; at least till I can get out.”

“ Don’t go, dear Maurice.”

O, the unutterable pathos of that look, and tone, in which this was uttered.

He saw and heard it, and his step halted just a little as he went toward the door.

“ I don’t wish I had any other husband—but O, I wish mine was—”

He did not hear the rest of it, the closing door cut it off, but he could guess what it was.

CHAPTER XXX.

HORTENSE GRAHAM found her hands very empty next morning, with no baby to nurse and wash and dress. The little house did not need much time for its keeping, and each child had its share in all the work, so she had much leisure for thought, and the teaching of the little home school. Again the question that had often suggested itself, which the care of her baby had kept in the background, asserted its claim to consideration. What should she do to increase her income? She had eked out the little sum in her purse until now, by carefully counting every penny. She had been supplied with many things from thoughtful friends, and had added to her resources by the sale of some articles of furniture, for which she had no room in the little home; but she could see that soon she must do something for money. Never obliged before to consider herself a part of the world outside, these suggestions which came to her now, had the interest of novelty, added to that of necessity, and so kept her mind busy. She erected the frame work of many plans, but concluded nothing.

She had heard the children's lessons, and had given them the living room in which to play for the rest

of the day ; and sat at the window of the front room, with some sewing, when Bridget McGuire passed by. The girl looked up, nodded soberly, and went around the corner. Hortense Graham fell to thinking about her, and then suddenly the talk with Mrs. Sloan, so long ago, flashed into her mind. Bessie ! the Fletchers ! What of them ?

She sprang up, rolled up her work, and said,

“ Children, can you stay here alone, for an hour or so ? ”

“ Why, mamma, where are you going ? ” asked Philip.

“ Hush, Philip,” said Clementine ; “ mamma’ll tell us when she wants us to know.”

Philip frowned.

“ What is it, Philip dear ? ” asked his mother, “ shall I not go ? ”

“ Of course, mamma ; we can stay : ” said Clementine quickly, and again Philip frowned and turned away.

“ What is it, Philip, my son ? ” asked Mrs. Graham, going to him and taking his hand, while her heart grieved within her.

He did not reply, only looked down with averted eyes.

“ My dear boy, tell me, what is it ? Shall I not go ? ”

Clementine began again to speak, and Philip looked quickly and angrily toward her, and cried,

“ Clem says ‘ hush ! ’ so, when I speak to you, and answers for me, so, just like she did then, and—and Ben is always the horse, and the big Injun, and—and I don’t like it.”

Mrs. Graham was amazed. She looked from one to the other of the children.

"Clem says 'hush' to me too," said Benny.

"Well: I didn't mean anything," said Clementine. "Only, I was afraid they'd bother you, mamma, asking so many questions."

"You did not really think that, daughter, did you?"

"Why, when you look so worried, mamma," and the child's face grew pale and drawn, "I thought maybe you'd want us to be still."

"She thinks we'll bother you if we talk to you, mamma:" said Benny. "Will we?"

"My dear child, never: we have been pretty still, now I think about it. But I did not intend it. Mamma must have made a big mistake. I never intend to look worried, dear. I do not intend that there shall ever be a moment, when you cannot all come right to me; and after this we will not say hush, at all. We must live together in everything, you and I, and help each other; and you must ask me anything, and tell me anything: and now, shall I go?"

"What if we should say you couldn't go?" said Benny, archly. Clementine drew a long quick breath, and put her upper teeth over her under lip, and made a movement as if to check Benny. But a glance from her mother, caused her face to relax and smile.

"Then dear," she replied, "I should have to explain all about why I wanted to go: and when you knew that, you'd say, go."

"Well, you may go, mamma:" said Benny.

"Thank you: and will you all stay in the house until I come back?"

"I will," said Philip.

"So'll I," said Benny.

Clementine was silent.

"Why don't you say, I too, Clem?" asked Benny.

"Mamma knows I'll stay in, 'thout asking," she replied.

"Did you, mamma?" asked Benny.

"I knew all my children would do it, if they knew I wished it," replied Mrs. Graham, while her heart was taking note of these little things, which had heretofore escaped her observation. She went to prepare for her walk, thinking of them.

"Strange things grow in neglected soil," she said to herself. "I have been almost neglecting these children. This is the quick fruit of the guilty, unbelieving sorrow, which so terribly impressed Clementine. She would have lost her childhood soon, and spoiled the boys. I must undo it quickly, somehow."

She put on her crape bonnet with the long veil falling almost to the hem of her dress behind, and, looking around, saw Benny at her side, gazing up at her. She had not been dressed for the street before. She had only been out to attend her dead, and to come to the little new home.

"O, I don't like that." It was Benny's voice. "Makes me think the hearse and burying-man is out there."

"My child!"

“Does mamma:—and you look so—so—O.”

Hortense looked quickly into the glass. Benny was unquestionably right. Her face had grown thin in these weeks of sorrow, and pale; her eyes hollow; and now in its setting of crape, it was ghastly, and without a token in it of the real comfort and peace which did fill her heart. If she was really in her inner life what she looked outwardly, she was a very hopeless woman. But she was not hopeless: she would not look so: she would brighten her face somehow. She turned to the children, who were all at her side now, looking up at her with awe-stricken faces.

“I will look better as soon as I can, my dear,” she said, addressing Benny. “We will talk about all these things when I come back. I must go now, if I am going to-day, so good-by.”

She stooped to leave a kiss on each upturned mouth, and then went out.

She felt strangely on the street. Her mourning costume seemed like a thick, black shadow, which wrapped her around. The wind tossed her veil, and the corner flapped her face like the wing of a bird of evil omen. She felt more alone in the world, than she had before since the Book spoke to her. She did not feel much like talking consolation to Madeline Fletcher, or helpful counsel to Bessie; and she wondered if Maurice would believe her if she told him she had come up out of the dark shadow of death, into the light of deathless hope.

She began to wish that she had put on some different dress. She ought to go as a light: as the

clear shining of the sun after rain, into that house. And then she thought :

“I don’t like to parade the change which has come to me, in this way. I will not : I will go back : I will not wear widow’s weeds. I know Charley would not like it.”

She turned and walked quickly back into the house, and when she came forth again, it was in her last year’s suit of gray, and with a little tinge of color on her cheek, and a light in her eyes, that was partly the reflection from the brightened faces of her children, and partly from the tinted lining of her bonnet. But from whatever source it came, it surely served to lift the shadow from her presence and remove from her the atmosphere of mourning. Kindly, cheery greetings waited upon her, as she went along her way, and the world seemed bright, and fit yet to enjoy a while, as she passed through it into heaven.

She found Mrs. Fletcher alone, Bessie having gone out after supplies. She was greeted with unfeigned surprise and delight ; a tremulous, tearful gladness it was, but none the less glad.

“O, I thought I never should see you again,” sobbed Madeline, clinging to the face of her friend, with eyes and lips, as she bent above her. “And I am so glad ; I didn’t know anything could ever make me so glad again.”

“I should have come before,” replied Hortense, very much moved, “but my delicate little baby held me close. But now that he has gone away to his

father, I come to you the very first day afterward. You have been shut in so long."

"O yes, so long; and I shall never go out any where any more."

"O, my dear, don't say that: you will: you must, with all these little ones to need a mother; you must not be a truant and hide away from them."

"Am I such a dreadful thing as that?" and Madeline's voice instantly took on a fretful tone. "O, you don't know how tired I am. I'm not a mother, any more; I'm only a burden, a nuisance. If it were not for me, this old shell could be left to the rats. The children could be taken care of by somebody, and Bessie could find her place and chance in the world. Poor child! She works so hard: and what does she get for it? I wish every day that I could take this little creature," and she uncovered the baby at her side, "and go away forever. There is no place fit for us but the graveyard."

"My dear friend—you must not!" and Hortense took her hands in both hers. "Your baby needs you; Bessie needs you; your boy: all the girls and your husband; what would they do and be without you, in the home? Surely, you have something to do, if—"

"O, there's plenty to do! I don't need to be told that. I ought to get up and go to work." Madeline's tone had grown cold and hard, and her face strange. "If that is all you came for, you might have saved yourself the trouble. O-o-o-o!" And a hysterical cry ended the steely sarcasm with which she began.

"My dear!" Hortense threw her arms about her. She saw that she had made a mistake: the poor bruised and broken-hearted captive of sorrow could not endure the spur of the usual motives.

"O-o-o-o! I can't! I can't! I can't!" she wailed.

"No: you need not: there! there!" and she drew her close and tried to comfort her, as she might have done her own sick child.

"O, I can't do anything: I can't—be any—body: I can't—live: O-o-o-o!"

"No—dear child, you need not."

"O—but I can't die: I must live—any how—and—and I can't—O, I am—so useless and good for nothing. And here's this baby—look at it: it don't grow any: it is more dead than alive: and I'm to blame for that, and—poor Bessie: she'd like to go to school: but she can't. And M-maurice—O-o-o. Maurice. What can he do—or be, with such a w-wife? I think he is trying hard: but I ain't any help."

Her voice swelled out into a loud wail. Hortense did not know what to do. She had never seen any one like this. It was evident that she could not introduce the matter which had been in her mind. It would have been a delicate thing, anyhow, to speak to Madeline Fletcher about her husband's degradation, or Bessie's danger. She was a sensitive woman—strong in her very weakness. She had always covered Maurice with a sweet, wifely loyalty, that was an impenetrable barrier to the most kindly interference, and Bessie was to her the embodiment of all that the word daughter meant: so that at best, it was a difficult undertaking, to try to open the eyes of the moth-

er to anything wrong in her child ; and now, it was impossible. Madeline must be soothed, comforted, not alarmed ; rested, not aroused. Hortense set herself to do this. By gentle passes over the throbbing temples, by holding the slender quivering form closely, by low, tender, restful tones, such as no art could have taught her, but which came out of the depths of her true, motherly nature, did she win the poor sufferer to rest. Madeline lay back on her pillow, while Hortense sat before her on the bedside. Their hands were clasped ; the sick eyes were drawing strength from the deep wells of living water, that she found in her friend's ; and a comforted look came into the pale face.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THUS Bessie found them as she came briskly in. "Mamma, it's me!" she cried through the house, as soon as she opened the outer door, stopping to lay something on the kitchen table, then springing in.

"O, Mrs. Graham!" There was heartfelt sympathy, love, and gladness in the greeting.

Hortense put out her hand an arm's length to reach the girl: drew her to her; took the young face and kissed it, saying,

"I thought I must find you out, you see."

"I'm so glad: you've done poor mamma good, I can see and not half try," replied the child, gratefully. "Have you wanted me, mamma?" kissing her. "Has the baby? If I'd a known who was here I shouldn't ha' worried."

"Did you worry? You need not. I always want you, whether I need you or not. I got very lonely and nervous before Mrs. Graham came, but—" a long sigh and a quivering smile finished the sentence.

"Well, now for your supper; something nice, mamma, see if 'tisn't."

"It's always nice, what you bring me, dear. I've got the nicest little cook, Mrs. Graham. Did you see the children, Bessie?"

"O, they're somewhere around ; when they smell the supper they'll come."

Madeline sighed, and looked so wearily up into Mrs. Graham's face, that her eyes filled with sympathetic tears, but she said nothing.

Bessie went out and closed the door. Hortense still held Madeline's hand.

"O, my little girls!" at length broke forth Madeline's voice, in quavers. "How they are robbed! Such care as my mother gave me: and now: I—they'll never miss me: and I—O—how I have—wanted my mother."

"Yes—of course—your mother—it would be such a comfort ; could not she come?"

"She? O—she went to heaven weeks ago."

"And I did not know it! You did not tell me?"

"You had your own trouble: and there was nobody to know."

"Well," said Hortense, "heaven's a good country to go to, and how fast everything precious slips away into it."

"And everything bad stays here."

"Well, you know nothing bad can arise there, so it has to settle down here, and lower, and lower, like the dregs in the bottom of the cup."

"And sometimes we get caught in with the dregs, and have to eat and drink them," said Madeline.

"O, no, not if we will let God give us the cup of His salvation, Madeline, I want to tell you, I came partly for that. I've passed through something since I saw you."

"Yes, I know ; and I was so selfish. When you first came to-day I thought only of my own trouble. I forgot that you had more than you could bear, and yet, somehow, I can't think of you as heart broken. You looked so like your own self when you came in : I—O, but I must tell you ! Last night when Maurice came home, he told me about hearing you sing, as he passed your house. He said he wondered what you could find to sing about. He thought you seemed to be the happiest woman in the world, and I told him maybe you were."

Mrs. Graham's face flushed, as she thought of her voice going out, and being recognized on the street. And then, as she remembered what Harley said to Philip, she felt a thrill of gladness that she had been able to convey a testimony to him.

"You know, of course," Mrs. Fletcher went on, "that Maurice has always been an unbeliever ; but, he did think so much of your husband. He had a wonderful influence over him ; and really he has not been the same man since Mr. Graham was taken sick. I've been careful not to let him know that I noticed any change, you know how queer men are about such things. But I know he is thinking, I know that he was impressed by the singing more than he cared to let me know."

"Well, Mrs. Fletcher," said Mrs. Graham, growing bold, at last, "I am deeply interested in your husband, not only for your sake, and the children's, but for Charley's memory. I know about Mr. Fletcher, more than I have ever intimated to you, and I did

come down here to-day, to tell you about it ; to talk to you about him : he ought to be reached."

Something in Mrs. Fletcher's manner arrested her words. She felt the pliant form contract in her arms ; the pale face flushed, the lips compressed, the eyes grew cold. Hortense felt that all gates were suddenly closed before her, and she must not hope to enter into the secrets of this loyal wife's heart. Yet she must ; for the sake of all concerned she must ; so she went on :

"My dear friend, I understand you. You cannot let any one touch this ; but I've suffered, dear, and I can't forget the days when my Charley rebelled against God, nor the fact that it was your own husband who gave him, at the risk of his life, a chance to live, and come home, and find Christ, and so get ready to go out into heaven at last ; and I remember, also, the day when Maurice Fletcher came to see Charley, as he lay there."

"Did he do that ?"

"Yes, indeed, and—"

"We did not know ; Bessie couldn't believe it ; well, go on ; what did he say ?"

"Not much : and Charley had to stop talking but he told him how he had prayed for him, and pleaded with him to stop drinking—"

Madeline Fletcher shrank at this, but Mrs. Graham went on :

"To stop drinking, and do right. Mr. Fletcher was deeply moved. I have not seen him since, but, Madeline, dear, I have taken up Charley's prayer for him."

"You? Do you pray for him?"

"I do, daily; and, you must let me talk to you, and help you, let me take part of your burden."

"You have enough of your own."

"I have disposed of all mine, and now I must help you."

"You can't help me about that, nobody can. I wonder I let you talk to me; but I think I am glad, after all. I think I have needed you, but I would never have asked for you."

"No: so I came without asking, and forced myself in. I dared it for love, Madeline, for love of you and Bessie. Do you know the child needs—much. I want her for Christ, for everything good, and sweet, and lovely, for nothing unholy."

"O!" interrupted Madeline, with a gasp.

"She was in my class in Sabbath-school, you know, but she has dropped out."

"How could she help dropping out—of everything? Look at her! What has she to wear? O, Mrs. Graham," she stopped and shut her lips tight.

"Yes, I understand; and that is one thing that Mr. Fletcher must be made to see. With all the sad things about it, Madeline, you have something to comfort you in Bessie. Her faithfulness to you is of praise among us all. You have your children—"

"Yes, and the saloon!" cried Madeline, while a scarlet spot sprang to her cheek. "Now that you know part, you may as well know it all. The saloon, and gambling hell, that has come between my children and all chance to be anybody. They are—O, what are they? Look at Bessie, and Harley, and

the others—June, and Annie, and the little ones; and Maurice; what hope or comfort is there anywhere! Look around here. There's money enough, yes, indeed; if he could have been let alone, we might have had as good a home as anybody, by this time, with the wages he earns. How we have lived, I don't know. I ran my sewing machine as long as I was able, but I'm broken down; I don't know what we are coming to. There must be a change of some sort, soon, or something dreadful will happen. Bessie will not stand it. She says, sometimes, she is going to take me, and run away, and take care of me, unless she could get hold of the money. She went down and got it one day, the last pay day, and then dreadful things happened. Bessie is not the girl to take things tamely, and I have been afraid—O, I am afraid—I guess it is well that you know, though she has seemed different since this little change in Maurice. If he would only keep on so; but it's too late for some things."

"Well, our hope is in God, and in ourselves. We must work, and pray, and trust. Mr. Fletcher must go on in the better way: he must stop the old way. He must do right."

Madeline smiled a sickly smile.

"I wish," she said, "that somebody could bring it about; but I think my hope is gone, and my courage. I am afraid."

"You must have faith, then you will have courage."

"Faith? I am afraid my faith died long ago."

"Not your faith in God? You don't doubt God?"

"I doubt everything that I can't see and feel. I see things as they are; facts are hard things to overcome. I have prayed to God for fifteen years, to save my husband, and he has got worse and worse. Everything has got worse. Faith can't survive the long silence out of which no answer ever comes. My praying to God has been like the praying of the prophets of Baal, when they cried and cut themselves, and jumped on the altar, and there was no voice that answered, or any that regarded. I pray yet, from habit, I suppose. I should go to church, if I could. I should have the children in Sabbath-school, if I could; but my strength is gone. I expect to die soon, wondering if there is really any God, and what Jesus meant when he said, 'If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.' I have often thought I would take an excursion to eternity to find out."

Madeline had talked rapidly, pouring out the bitter complaint of her soul.

Hortense had sat amazed, and while the words seemed dreadful, yet she was glad to hear them, for every utterance was a revelation to her, and a medicine to Madeline.

"Well," she said, in reply, "I know that there is a God, who is our tender Father; and that Jesus meant just what he said; and I am going to keep on praying. I must go, now. I left my children alone. I shall come again, very soon, and we will talk it over, and I will tell you what God has taught me in these few weeks; wonderful lessons of Himself and His love. I shall pray for you, and for him, and Bes-

sie, dear child ! And I do know God hears and answers."

"I am glad if you do : I wish I did ; but I don't."

"Well, tell me : do you believe in me, just a little ?"

"Indeed I do, dear Hortense. I must believe in hands that rest me so ; you have helped me to-day."

"Well, then : I'll tell you what we will do : you hold on to me, and I will hold on to God."

"I shall certainly hold on to you, if you let me. I felt myself drowning : and now that you have given me your hand, I shall hold on."

CHAPTER XXXII.

AS has already been stated, Hortense Graham had never identified herself with temperance work.

“My work is church work,” she always said.

Her interest in the W. C. T. U. and the Reformation, had been confined to the few personal friends who were in it. The Weldons, Annie Dayton, and Hollis Ellenwood. And much as she appreciated their work, she always felt a little regret that so much good working ability should be diverted from the church into other channels. The church was the one institution through which everything good must be done; and if this grand team of workers would but bring all their power, and the Gospel-meeting enthusiasm, into the church, if the money put into Union Hall, or the Hall itself, had but been all consecrated to the church, how much better it would have been! She had often said that she thought it would be better to say less about the saloon and more about salvation.

But that day, as she walked home from Fletchers, her thoughts took a new turn. She seemed to have been caught in the grip of that awful power, that was able to wreck anything that came in its way. This

home of her friend ! She had known that drink was its curse : she had shared the common feeling of pity for the family, and of resentment for the husband and father ; but it had never come so home to her heart, as in this little visit. Sweet Bessie : the only real support of this home, because of the saloon ; and she, cheated, by the same power that robbed her of her father, of her chance as a young and lovely woman in the world. Her graceful form, wrapped about in ill-made, slimsy garments, which would certainly be unwelcome in church or Sabbath-school. Say what you might about it, it was true that she would not be made to feel at home in the house of God, unless she could go better dressed than she had been for many months. The bright, winsome child, left to find her associates among the low and unclean, all because of the saloon. Madeline Fletcher, the beautiful, refined, cultivated woman of a few years ago, brought to be what she is now, by the saloon.

If the saloon could do such things to women and children, and produce such a man as Maurice Fletcher, it was time something was done to the saloon. So thought Hortense Graham. A heat, as of fire, began to burn in her breast, before she got home and all the evening, as she talked with her children. As she put them to bed, with hymn and prayer, it burned. The saloon took shape before her as a thing of life, which must be antagonized, because of what it was doing, especially in the house of her friend.

A great tide of fervent prayer came rolling in, and beat upon her lips ; so that, while still moving about the room, the children heard her pray. She longed

to say things to God, such as she, nor yet any one, had ever said before. Surely the right thing had not been said to Him, who hears and answers, or such things could not be. "Ye pray, and receive not, because ye ask amiss." She knew a great deal of praying was done, but it must have been amiss somehow, to make it possible for so many saloons to stay in Clifton, after all.

She tried to voice the prayer of her soul, but could not, and finally settled down into a silent but persistent and painful crowding of her heart's desire, against the promise of God. Suddenly there flashed into her mind something which made her remember the women in the Crusade, praying against the saloon.

She had never before been able, for a moment, to imagine herself as a crusader, but now, by no choice of her own, but by the nature of things, she seemed to have been transported back to that time, and to be drawn into the very heart of that fire. She saw and felt just how a woman could go out and kneel in the slush and sawdust of the pavement or saloon, and pray. She wondered that they ever stopped. She wondered that the men, Christian men, should have stayed behind. She wondered that the whole church was not there on their knees, crying out against that awful tyranny. And now she vowed that the church should do it; she would see that they were so awakened, that they could not help it. Nearly all night, on her knees, and lying awake on her bed, she prayed and planned for the extension of the Kingdom of Christ, so as to crowd out and occupy

the ground of every saloon in the land, and provide a safe harbor for its victims.

The next Sabbath morning, the first after the baby left her, found her and her children in the old place in church. There was about her a self-forgetfulness, an uplifted look, that added a new and peculiar dignity to her, which commanded recognition everywhere. She had been called a proud woman : but people forgot that, and said :

“ How grand and strong she is ! How up-borne ! What a light in her face ! What a thing for three such children to have such a mother, if they must go without a father.”

She wore no black ; no ornamentation whatever, on her plain gray suit. People thought, when they noticed this : “ She looks as if she might be a Quaker.”

Aunt Gracia said to Uncle Benjamin :

“ Clad, at last, in the uniform of the children of light.”

She received the greetings of friends, in a manner which made words of condolence impossible. Everybody talked about her, as they went home. A few read and understood the secret of her strength, with real appreciation, while many criticised, and some condemned. Her luminous face, in which there was no room for a shadow of sorrow ; the calm repose of her manner ; were things that the sin-sick eyes of the world could not endure to see.

She took her old place in the Sabbath-school, releasing Helena Birdsell, who had been her supply all these months ; and so gathered up, as if to hold forever, the lines of her regular church work,

She had determined to make an opportunity to speak to her pastor about the Fletchers. But he gave her the opportunity without asking, coming at once to greet her, when service was over.

Pastor Wadelle, of the Memorial Church, was in love with the W. C. T. U. and its work, but he never did like to think of the saloon. He was glad the women had undertaken to cleanse the unclean world. He had had a terrible fear that the ministers would have to go in up to their knees, in its filth, and take hold without gloves. But such women as Aunt Gracia, and her coadjutors, had averted that disaster to ministerial cloth; and he appreciated it. He hoped they would succeed, and be quick about it.

Hortense said, as he came to greet her:

"I want a few quiet words with you, please."

So he led the way to his study, and waited for her to open her subject. She told, as briefly and plainly as she could, about the Fletchers; he listened respectfully, even patiently.

"And now," she concluded, "I know you can do them good. We must look after them, and the saloon, Mr. Wadelle. We ought to be doing something in our church about these things, these awful, awful things."

"Yes:" he replied reflectively, "that is true: but I am already over-worked; don't you know? Just see what I have to do with a membership like ours, and all the visiting to do. I have really been afraid you might feel that I neglected you in your affliction."

"Me? O no: and as far as I am concerned, as much as I have appreciated all your pastoral care, I would willingly forego it, and have my part transferred to them."

"But the church at large would not be so considerate: and there are young people and children, you know. I do not give them the time now, that they ought to have. We must spend our energies for them, to hold them, because the saloon is so terrible: we must keep hold of our youth."

"Certainly," cried Hortense, warmly.

"You have two boys to bring up in the church, so that you can appreciate that."

"Indeed I can: yes, indeed: I do. But Mr. Wadelle: who is going to look after—those away off out there? You almost imply that you can't. Has the church no way of doing anything for them?"

"Why yes: our city missionary, you know: but he complains that his hands are full: and I doubt if he would be of much use in a case like this."

"Well—I think we must—"

"Excuse me for interrupting: but would it not be well to take this case to the W. C. T. U.? This is in their line, more than ours."

"Y-e-e-s? But I—I thought the church ought to do it. I am not a member of the Union. I thought I should do my work in the church."

"That is quite right, Mrs. Graham; and we can keep every willing worker busy, in the regular church work."

And is not this regular?—Bessie is—"

"Yes: but you see: we, the church, have appointed our city missionary to look after all such; and of course we hope our people will also go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in to the mission schools, or our own here: and of course we shall be glad to do all we can for them."

"But you see, poor Mrs. Fletcher, and her children: they cannot come in: and Mr. Fletcher will not: what then? There's the saloon: it is in the way: why those children have not clothes."

"O—if that is all, we can clothe them."

"Clothe them? That would be impossible. You need to know them, Mr. Wadelle: why Bessie would tear into shreds anything given her in that way: and I don't know what Maurice Fletcher would do, if anybody should offer charity. Why, he earns a hundred dollars a month, Mr. Wadelle."

"Well then, let him provide for his family; what have we to do about it?" asked Mr. Wadelle, in amazement.

"It is the saloon, Mr. Wadelle: the saloon gets that money, and the family suffer. The church must take hold of the saloon, Mr. Wadelle!"

"That is for the temperance people, my dear Mrs. Graham. The W. C. T. U. was raised up for just that thing. I believe in the W. C. T. U. That is their work. The church cannot take time, and she ought not, anyhow, to touch those outside issues. I never believed in bringing politics into the church. As for this wicked man and his afflicted and obstinate family, I'm sure I don't know what we can do for them. You know Isaiah and Paul lamented because

all would not hear, and come, and obey. So I suppose it will be unto the end of time. We cannot compel them to obey the gospel."

"N-o-o, I suppose not:" said poor Hortense, much perplexed. "Well: thank you. I hope I have not detained you," she said, rising quickly, after a little still pause; and turned away with her children. The rest of the day, her heart was heavy. She felt strangely depressed, and drew the anxious eyes of little Clementine, who seemed, since that awful night of tempest and storm, to watch her mother's face, as an astronomer does the sky, for "indications."

"Mamma," at last said Benny the bold, who always spoke when others only sat and thought, "what was the matter with Mr. Wadelle? Don't he know what to do, mamma?"

She did not answer quickly, but took her boy by the shoulders, as he sat astride on her lap, and looked into his eyes. He took hold of her wrists, and began to sway back and forth.

"Say, mamma, he said he didn't know what to do; can't the preacher and the church full of people do anything they like?"

"Not anything, dear."

"Not if God helps them, and wants it done, too?"

She looked more and more troubled, her eyes fixed on the form of the child, as he swayed up and down, holding on to her wrists. At last he stopped, and threw his arms about her neck, and said:

"I guess we miss little Charley: don't you, mamma?"

Hortense was surprised into the consciousness that she had forgotten. This was but the third day since the cherubic presence was borne away; and he seemed utterly to have passed from her thought, in the absorption of this life-and-death interest in lost souls.

"Do you miss little brother, dear?" she asked, kissing the boy.

"Yes; don't you? You looked 's if you was going to cry."

"Did I? Well, it was not because I was thinking of him, then. He is having a bright, sweet Sabbath with papa, and Jesus, and the angels; I couldn't cry about that. I was thinking about some little children, who are—O, so neglected: so in danger of growing up bad; and I suppose that was what made me look so."

"Us children, mamma? That's just what grand-ma Date's afraid of."

"What!"

"Yes, she is, mamma, she said so yesterday."

"What?"

"She did, mamma," said Philip, coming to his mother's side.

"When? How?"

"Why, after you'd gone, she came in the carriage to see you, and we was here alone, you know, and she said we would be neglected and grow up bad, and something 'd have to be done with us."

"There won't, will there, mamma?" piped Benny, while Clementine looked on from her chair, with intense interest in every line of her face.

"You must not be neglected, surely, or left to grow up bad. Grandma was just anxious that everything should be right, you know," explained Hortense, while yet her throat seemed suddenly to fill, and her heart to sink. However, she had long since learned not to look for help to any earthly source, and she only pressed Benny closer, and bidding Clementine bring her library book, said: "I will read to you all, awhile, and then we will study our Sunday-school lesson."

That night, after the children were asleep, this remark of her mother, and her conversation with Mr. Wadelle, and her visit to Madeline Fletcher, all blended in a conspiracy to rob her of her peace. But although she was kept awake, and her mind was taxed with the suggestions that trooped like an army on a raid, through her brain; yet she was kept steady in her trust in God. Her own personal matters came in for attention again, and she realized, as she turned matters over, that she must at once begin to look for something to do. It did not cost them much to live, but too much for ease on her part; too much to make a quiet, domestic life possible. She must reach out and grapple the world, if she would eat, or feed her children.

She thought of a place in her brother's office, as a possibility. She might keep the books: she would, at least, see him about it. With this she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE next morning she hurried through her work, that she might get out to the factory before noon. She set Clementine and Philip at their lessons; Benny was to take his later, when she had time to sit down with him; so he was following her about, talking, questioning, about everything he saw. At length she thought of an errand to her sister Georgia, who lived up Court Street, which was fully in reach of Benny's capacity, so she said:

"Benny, get your cap, dear, and take a message for mamma to Aunt Georgia, will you?"

"Of course I will, mamma; but 'spose I said I won't, what 'ud you do, then?"

"I don't cross bridges until I get to them, pet: you don't say won't to your mamma, so she don't know just what she would do."

"Well, some boys say won't awful. Cousin Wellen says won't, and swears at his mamma; but I never will, see 'f I do."

"O, I hope not, my darling."

"But s'pose, mamma, some bad boy should teach me to: what 'ud you do—then?"

"I don't know, dear, what I should do then. I think I should really die. But run on now, dear, to Aunt Georgia: take her this note, for mamma."

Benny bounded away, his brain keeping time to his feet, as he went.

Hortense put the last morning touches to the housekeeping, and got herself ready for her call. As she came to the corner of Court and State streets, she was surprised to see Benny coming out of the door of a building opposite, in company with a larger boy, of decidedly unfavorable appearance. She stopped a second, and then began rapidly crossing the street. Benny looked up, and seeing her, ran toward her, while the larger boy retreated within the door.

"Benny," she said, in a tone of surprise.

"That you, mamma?"

"Of course it is I: what does this mean, my son? Did I not send you to Aunt Georgia's?"

"Yes'm: and I'm going just now. I just stopped a minute, you see: that boy—" and Benny threw his hand out toward the fellow who had come again, out to the steps, "he's a real nice boy, mamma: he's talked with me over the fence, lots o' times; and he knows my cousin Wellen: he walked along with me and told me if I'd come into his papa's store, he'd treat me."

"Treat you! what does that mean?"

"Why, give me some candy: see?"

He put his hand in his blouse pocket, and drew it forth, filled with suspicious looking candy, of all colors.

Hortense Graham looked at it, and then at the "store." The "nice boy" stood on the threshold, with the door knob in his hand. She looked again

at Benny ; he was just putting a bright green lump in his mouth.

"Don't eat that, dear! let me see the candy," she said.

The little hand, full of the stuff, opened before her, and she began picking out the colored lumps, and throwing them away: looking up occasionally at the building.

"Don't throw it all away, mamma: " remonstrated Benny, yet holding his hand loyally open.

"They are not fit to eat, dear: perhaps the white ones won't hurt you: but no! throw it all down, darling! and we'll make some nice clean creams when we get home."

"O, that'll be nice: " and he tossed the handful into the street. His mother looked up again at the "store." What kind of a place could it be? There was no sign of a confectionery. There were bottles in the window. It was strange that she had never noticed the place: and it was within one door of their beautiful Memorial Church.

Every sense of Hortense Graham was like a scout armed and mounted, on the alert, to explore the path her children must tread, through this world to heaven. Now they were like pickets sent flying in, at a shot from some unnamed enemy. She would know what this place was, that had opened its door to her boy's feet. She grasped his hand, and started forward.

"What you going to do, mamma?"

"See this store myself."

At her first step forward, the "nice boy" flew within, and Benny drew back, saying,

“ ’Tain’t a nice place, mamma : ain’t anything there for ladies : they’re all dirty boys and girls.”

She went on, however, leading Benny. She opened the door : a green Venetian screen confronted her, shutting off the view, but not the vile odors of the place. Strange tones, and sounds also, greeted her. She paused, hesitated an instant, but whatever it was, her boy had been in it ; and any place that invited him, she must be brave enough to investigate. So she went on around the screen, then stopped, and caught her breath. The scene before her ! what did it mean ? Could this be reality : or was it some horrid nightmare. The bloated, brutish faces—children’s faces—girls and boys ; the unseemly attitudes : the sickening odor, and what ! that girl ! who ? she ought to know that face ; but the bleared eyes, the red bloat, completed a disguise, that would have made it difficult for her mother to have recognized June Fletcher.

The bartender of the “ Lamb’s Fold ” as well as the “ lambs ” were startled by the apparition of this white-faced woman. For a moment not a muscle moved : every eye stared at her and her boy. She started back ; and Benny was about to cry ; when the man behind the bar straightened himself, and started to come toward her. She could not have him approach one step nearer ; and with a gasp of terror, she turned and fled, dragging Benny behind her. A shout arose as she turned the awful whiteness of her face away ; a burst of laughter, dreadful, because it was childish, and yet so wicked. Her ears tingled, as it ran out after her, and her feet hastened to get out of its sound.

"Don't, mamma, you hurt!"

She paused at the cry. She looked down at her boy: she was holding his hand in a vise-like grip, and his face was full of wonder.

"Did I hurt your little hand, dear?" she asked. "Here, let us change hands."

She tried to speak calmly, but her tone was unnatural. She turned toward home.

"Mamma," said Benny, "sha'n't I go to Aunt Georgia's?"

"No, we must get home."

"Did you come after me, mamma?"

"I think I did."

"Did you know I had gone into that dirty place?"

"No, but God did. And I am sure He sent me; we'll talk about it when we get home."

She tried to walk as though she had not been in the ante-chamber of eternal death, and look as though her boy's innocent eyes had not seen its uncleanness; but her heart was palpitating with such fear as she had never known in her life. Could she ever again trust the streets of this city of churches? Her children had always passed this place to go to church or Sabbath-school: had they ever seen it before? She must put the bolted door of her home between her little flock and the rest of the world, as quickly as possible. O heaven! Would that it might take them all and shut them in!

She would at that moment have seen them silenced, and stiffened, and whitened by death, with the assurance that they would pass directly into the

security of the world where there is no curse, and have been glad.

When they entered the house, Clementine and Philip both looked up; and then sprang to her and Benny.

"O, mamma," cried Clementine, with a tone of pain and despair, as she saw the look on her mother's face.

Mrs. Graham took the little girl's hand, and dropped into a chair.

"Have either of you children ever seen the inside of that building next to the church, on the corner?" she asked.

"What, that saloon they call the 'Lamb's Fold?'" asked Philip. "Clem aint, of course."

"Have you?"

"Why, yes, all the boys have."

"Philip!"

Her face grew ghastly, she swallowed convulsively.

"Mamma, mamma!" Philip came to her and stood, his face mirroring the distress of hers. "What is the matter, mamma?"

"To think that both of my little boys have been in that awful place!"

"Has Benny?"

"Yes, I have, Phil: to-day; and so has mamma, and it's awful nasty smellin', and I'll never go in again, no matter if Fred Knight says he'll give me a bushel of candy: and say, mamma—creams!"

That was a poor time to say "creams."

"When did you go into that place, Philip?" asked Mrs. Graham, a little severely.

"'Tother day, when Llewellyn and I went down to the factory ; he was going in, and I went with him : but I don't see anything to go in there for."

"What did he go in for ?" asked Mrs. Graham, her consternation growing.

"I don't know : 'cause Fred Knight called him, I guess. I didn't stay. I didn't like it, so I went out, and waited for him."

Mrs. Graham got up and laid off her bonnet. A strange fire was in her face : her lips were tightly compressed. She looked as if about to execute judgment. The children were astonished and afraid.

After a moment she turned upon them, and opened her mouth, and began to speak. It did not seem like her voice that spoke, but out of the terrible pressure upon her heart, she poured forth such words as she could never have uttered before. Her tongue was tipped with eloquence. She told them all what she had discovered : the dangers that threatened even their own little home from the batteries of sin. She arraigned the saloon before them, as though they were twelve chosen and sworn men, and she both lawyer, witness, and judge. Benny sat with his hands on his knees, bending forward, his mouth open, feeling as though he had been rescued from a lion. Clementine, with her face stern and set, while Philip's dark eyes glowed, and his face paled and flushed by turns, as she related how Benny had been enticed into the place, and poured out the indignation of her soul. As soon as she paused, so that there was a chance for him, Philip sprang up and cried :

"I wish I could get hold of that Fred, and give him a thrashing!"

"You ain't big enough, Phil:" said Benny.

Philip looked down at his slender form: his breast heaved: his fists clinched; his face flushed with passion; his dark eyes burned black as midnight, and he cried,

"Well then—I wish I was a man—to vote against Fred's father's saloon: a little man's vote is worth 's much 's a big one's: ain't it, mamma?"

"Bless your heart, my darling!" and Hortense caught Philip to her breast. "Yes indeed: but what made my boy so wise? That is the way for a man to strike such a thing, I guess."

"Well," said Clementine, from her perch on the foot of the couch, "I don't wonder the mothers work in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union."

"Nor I:" said Hortense. "And I'm going to join."

From that time, the "Lamb's Fold" was a place to get by as quickly as possible. In fact, the children began to go around the block, to go to church and Sabbath School, so as to avoid passing this plague-spot. And the "nice boy" made it a point to keep out of sight, but he watched the Graham children with an evil eye, under cover.

Hortense Graham began at once to fortify against this enemy of her home. She joined the Union: pledging all the time she could possibly spare from that which must be given to the support of herself and children; and determined never to refuse any

service, to which she was appointed, if she could help it.

She found employment: but not in the factory. Her brother was on the School Board, and obtained for her an election to fill the vacancy in the grammar room, at the opening of the fall term. Meanwhile she had the summer in which to get ready.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MAURICE FLETCHER was startled out of his indifference, by the things which he had discovered about his children. He was satisfied that Harley had stolen the money, and that his girls had already passed beyond the line of virgin innocence. Dull as were his moral sensibilities, blind as was his faith, his pride as a man was shocked and hurt ; and he began to cast about for a remedy. He would ask no counsel : he would not take it, if offered : whatever he did he would do in, and by himself. He was the head of his house : and what he could not do for them, must not be done by anybody. He had a directness of character, that always led him straight out upon any line of conduct which he chose for himself.

So it happened that after a few days of close and sober thinking, in which he said but little to any one, but attended closely to his engine by day, and watched his children the rest of the time ; he settled upon a course of action, and began at once to carry it into execution, by following Harley into the back yard, and thus addressing him :

“ Here : you young dog, did you ever go to a circus ? ”

"'Course I did: what you take me for?"

"A precious scamp; but that's all right: only I thought we'd have a show of our own: what 'd ye say?"

"Bully!—A show? with a clown? and—"

"Yes: a clown and everything: with extras."

"Glory! I'll be the clown."

"All right."

"We'll have to get a lot o' fellows for a troop."

"The troop 's all right; we'll begin to-night. I'll get home early: we'll tell Bess to have a good supper, and get it out o' the way, and we'll have the kitchen. We'll have to have girls in it: tell June and Annie: we must have 'em all: you look out for that."

"They'll come. That 'll be dandy! Better 'n anything. I'll see t' it, pap; trust me to get up a howl."

The boy's face beamed up into his father's, with genuine boyish delight, and a peculiar sharpness of expression, that awakened strange feelings in the father. He had not thought much about this boy, only to be glad that he had him. His training was something to which he had never given a moment's consideration. He had a vague idea that the fact that he was a boy, insured a man by-and-by. And he should have pride in a man of his own, as in an engine that was alive, which he had created himself; but when it occurred to him that if things went on as they were going, the boy would have to be taken in hand by the law, before he got to be a man, he was alarmed into an investigation of this young life, and

into an attempt to direct it. But, at the best, it was an aggravated case of the blind leading the blind. Yet Maurice Fletcher was really putting forth the best there was in him. His girls he would have ignored, if he could; but in these days of thinking, he had become painfully aware of the fact that he was in imminent danger of being involved in all the disgrace which attends profligacy in women, and those women his own daughters. He could not put them out of the way: out of his life; out of his home; out of his record: so he must see what could be done to reform them.

Fletcher descended from his perch of pride to inform Bessie of the fact that he was going to have the kitchen for a time with the children after supper. He did not even say to her that he was anxious about them; that something must be done to keep them in. He would not have acknowledged that to any living soul. But meagre as it was, the announcement was sufficient to make Bessie open her eyes, and then curl her lip. Madeline heard through the doorway, and marvelled, and was almost glad.

Fletcher's mind was on his scheme all day. It was evident to John Mark that something very unusual was passing in the mind of the man. But John had the instincts of a successful fisherman, and so, while he watched Fletcher with the interest of a zealot, he was silent as a cat. The two men spent the day with scarcely a word between them. Fletcher was in a controversy with himself. One thing he saw must be done, and yet he was not ready to say it should be. It involved so much, so strongly

savores of reformation and conversion, and all that. It was the very thing that was done by men who were fools enough to believe in God, and all that sort of trash. He wanted to steer clear of everything of that description, and yet, if he succeeded in what he had undertaken, it would come to that. The fact, however, that Charles Graham had planned something like it for his own family, invested it with a certain kind of dignity and manliness, that made him tolerate the suggestion as it came to him. Yet he fought it, feeling all the time that it would gain the day, and become an important part of the programme, in spite of him, for it lay in the direct line of the course he had surveyed. It loomed up before him like a mountain in the way of a civil engineer. He knew he could not ignore it; he must bow his pride and unbelief to it, and go through, or stop short of the object he had in view.

Harley had been away from home almost constantly of late. But to-day he was every where "under foot," as Bessie said. He came in, and walked around, scanning the walls, the furniture; jumped on the table, and tried its strength; and began placing chairs in a row for some purpose, when Bessie issued a remonstrance in the shape of a rap on the head with the rolling pin, and drove him out. At another time he entered his mother's room, and began pulling open the drawers of an old bureau.

"What do you want, dear?" asked Madeline, gently.

"O, suthin'."

"Well now, you just get out, and let things alone!" cried Bessie, coming to the rescue. "There's no 'suthin'' for you, here," and she pushed him away from the bureau, and shut the drawers. Harley, with his usual imperturbable good humor, suffered himself to be thrust away, and out of the room, and went on busily about his preparations for the circus. He had his ideas of what a domestic circus ought to be, and was trying with all the zeal of a boy of twelve to work them out, and succeeded in so worrying and annoying Bessie that she lost her temper completely; so that when the children came, eager and expectant, each, except June, who had not been seen during the day, having been coached by Harley, she was, to the general enthusiasm, what a wet blanket is to a fire. She had a good supper: she could hardly help that if she had anything fit to cook: for her fingers seemed to appetize everything they brought to the table; but otherwise she was out of gear, and the family comfort was in jeopardy. Her manner was sarcastic and cold toward her father. Whether this had any influence upon him or not, certain it was that he was like a rent sail. He had a genuine purpose and plan for the evening, which was at least better than anything he had ever brought to lay upon his home altar before; and, while it had been a burden all day, and kept him even more silent than usual, yet it had warmed his heart a little, and did make his step a little more firm as he walked home. But that had all passed: in the place of warmth, his heart seemed like a lump of cold lead in his breast. He laid his arms on the table;

bent his face down over his plate, and ate his supper without so much as lifting his eyes.

Bessie observed him with her head set back, her eyes glowing like coals under ashes, and a cynical smile on her lips. Harley was quick to detect the signs of a storm, and began to watch with the peculiar relish which he had for these exhibitions. They were to him much like two game fowls, or dogs, or, better yet, a pair of pugilists; and he was ready to form a ring, and begin to bet on them. He always, however, would bet on Bess, for she was, as yet, the champion.

The children never talked, unless to quarrel at the table, but kept their mouths and fingers busy with the food. They ate more rapidly than usual to-night, and were away from the table, and ready for fun. Fletcher sat still, his elbows on either side of his plate. At length he took a great jack knife from his pocket, and began scraping his horny finger nails, sitting more listless and sullen than usual, still at his place at the table. Bessie cleared away the things; she had to reach under his hands for his plate, and draw the cloth out from under his elbows. She did this with a jerk, saying,

“That’s a pretty thing to do at the table.”

He looked up at her with a flash in his eyes, but evidently bethought himself, and wheeled away on one chair leg, and said nothing.

“Is that part o’ the circus?” asked Harley. “Say, pap, s’pose you and Bess fight it out: ’twould be bully.”

Fletcher looked up again: but this time there was

no fire in his eyes: and in a low tone he asked:

“Where’s June?”

“June? What’s that to do with it?”

“A good deal: I wanted you all here; have you told her?”

“Haint seen her to-day.”

“Bessie,” Fletcher did not say Bessie often. She turned and stood threateningly, proudly before him; more proud because his tone touched her, “have you?”

“Have I what?”

“Seen June to-day?”

“No: I’ve been too underfoot to see anybody.”

He sat scraping his nails: the harsh sound of it was enough to sicken any but a beast. The little girls perched themselves on the wood-box: Annie stood first on one foot and then on the other, while Harley, astride a chair, looked at the contestants with curious interest. He had never seen his father quite so like a “whipped cock with drooping feathers” as at this moment, and it was as good as a circus, as far as it went.

Madeline lay quivering with nervous apprehension in the room beyond.

After a minute, Fletcher looked up again, snapped his knife shut, put it in his pocket, and said: “Children, we’re all going to smash together.”

For an instant the room was as still as the grave; then Harley blew a long whistle, and Bessie said:

“Have you just found it out?” and a gasping sob from the other room rasped the air.

“No: I have suspected it for a long time, but I’ve

found out some things lately that must be stopped."

"Yes?—well, you are right," said Bessie firmly, while her cheeks and lips grew pale.

"And I propose to do my part toward stopping."

"O-o-o!" wailed the feeble voice of the wife and mother, and Fletcher felt something rise in his throat, but he went on:

"Now you," to Harley, "and you," to Marianna, and June, (I do wish she were here,) know more what I mean than anybody else; and you'll know what I mean when I say it's got to stop."

"Glory!" cried Harley, "aint that fine!" And he began to clap his hands and stamp his feet. "I thought I was the clown."

"It's all right, Harley;" and Fletcher's voice was husky, "it's what I ought to expect. I'm doing it, not you. You're what I've made you; but—"

He stopped suddenly, sprang from his chair and turned his back upon them. Sadie and Susie looked at each other, with their wizzen faces drawn down as if with fear. Susie drew her feet up and took her bare toes in her fingers, and with her chin on her knees, looked up at her father through the tangled bangs of hair; more elfin than human. He turned his head and saw her, and shuddered and grew pale, and muttered a terrible imprecation between his set teeth.

"Well, pap," cried Harley, "'s yer back the drop curtain? Coz if 'tis—"

"Harley, you shut up!"

It was Bessie, and she enforced the demand by a stride toward him, and a grip on his shoulder.

"Hi! now, Bess—"

"Shut up, I say, or get out."

"No Bessie, child, he aint to blame; I did it. I told him we'd have a circus, you see. He must do so, until he learns how to do better. I earnestly hope it wont take him forty years."

Bessie still gripped his shoulder like a vice. Harley laid his head over on her hand and grinned, and after a moment she released him, and bowing her head, walked slowly away to her mother, who was sobbing bitterly on her pillow. Bessie sat down on the bedside and looked before her at the wall, her eyes dark with the shadows of intense feeling, her lips compressed, her cheeks white, until she could sustain her pride no longer; then throwing her head down upon her mother's pillow, she herself broke into weeping. This was too much for Harley. Bessie was beaten somehow, by something, or she never would do that. He had seen angry tears in her eyes when they flashed with electric flames; but never had he seen her bow her head and sob in that way; and every muscle in his body became rigid, his nerves tense as whip-cord; and springing up he confronted his father with clinched fists, and set teeth, and fearful oaths. "Here you!" he cried, "we'll fight it out, we will, you and I."

Fletcher reached down and took the bony fists in his hands.

"Harley," he said, "listen to me now. I told you we'd have a circus, that was the best name I had for it; but let me tell you just what I meant; then, as you

say, we'll have it out together. I expect we'll have to both put on iron knuckles, though."

"We will?" and Harley's tone was full of surprise and interest.

"Yes: that is it," and Fletcher took a comic almanac from his pocket and laid it on the table, open at a blank page upon which something had been written. He could not explain how he had chosen this in parody of Charles Graham's Bible. He somehow was ashamed of it, but he had no time now to make a change.

"Here;" he said, "do you see this?"

"Of course I see it," said Harley, "what does it mean, though?"

"Read it and see."

Harley began, while the other three children gathered about them.

"I do—s-s-s-o-l-e-m-n-l-y—what's that spell?"

"Can't you tell what that spells?" and Maurice Fletcher's tone was stern with amazement.

"No, I don't know what it spells."

"Harley! Don't you go to school?"

Harley laughed.

"Not much, I tell you; I haint time."

Fletcher clapped his hand to his head, and stood a second with such pain in his face, that even Harley had to stop laughing. After a little, he dropped his hand to the page again, and with a deep breath, said:

"Well, that spells solemnly—read it as well as you can."

Harley went on:

“ I do solemnly—p-r-o-m-i-s-e—”

He paused, and turned his face, with a broad grin on it, up to his father's, while all the girls giggled. Fletcher pronounced the word, and Harley began again.

“ I do solemnly promise to—”

This time he stopped and waited before the word of two syllables. Fletcher, with the pain deepening on his face, pronounced :

“ Abstain.”

“ To abstain from all—”

“ Intoxicating,” prompted his father.

“ Intoxicating—d-r—drink—as long as I live.” Then he looked up with another grin.

“ Why, that's a temperance pledge,” said Mari-anna.

“ O—o—a temperance pledge? Like Lil Hoffman's father signed? And now they has lots o' nice things,” cried Susie, clapping her hands.

“ O—o—o,” answered Sadie, drawing her lip under her teeth, and treading up and down on her toes.

“ Would you like to sign it? ” and Fletcher looked down at the little girls. He had hardly ever addressed them in any way, and never, never like that.

“ I wish you would,” said Sadie.

“ Do you? And if I do, what then? ”

“ O—o—o,” it was all the child could say, and type and paper can never give the vowel as she uttered it then.

“ If I do, will you? ” and he covered the two little girls with one glance.

"I can't write," said Sadie.

"I can't, either," said Susie, her elfish eyes shooting their uncanny glances at him, through the veil of unkempt hair.

He reached down toward her to put her hair back, but she drew her head up and sprang away.

"What d' ye do that for?" he asked. "D' ye think I was going to strike you?"

"Dunno," said the child.

"Well, you may know: I shall not strike you. Come back; I want to put your hair out of your eyes."

She gave the hair an upward sweep with her hand, and came up closer than before, looking up wonderingly into his face.

"You can write?" and he looked at Marianna.

"Yes, some."

"And you, Harley?"

"I can't write enough to sign that."

"Not if I do?"

"No, sir-ee! I see your game, and you don't ketch me—A circus!"

Bessie and her mother had heard the effort at reading, and both almost ceased breathing, in the intense interest with which they followed the unfolding of the purpose, which had been hidden under Fletcher's sullen manner, like the kernel of a sweet nut under a bitter husk. Bessie lifted herself on her elbows, and turned her ear up to catch every word and sound from the other room; and, at length, she flung herself off the bed, and glided so swiftly out, that before he heard her, she was at her father's side,

her two hands clasped about his arm, her face eloquent, beautiful, shining up into his.

“O, father!”

Such a tone; it shot into his very soul, thrilling him all the way through.

“Will you be so glad, child?”

“O, father!”

He drew his arm away from her hands, and put it around her. She opened her lips to speak, still gazing up into his face, he down into hers, but uttered no sound. The color fled from her face, her eyes drooped, and she slipped down out of his clasp, into a dead faint at his feet.

“Well, if this aint a circus!” cried Harley in alarm, springing around the table to where his father was lifting Bessie in his arms.

“Poor child!” said Fletcher.

“What’s the rumpus, anyhow?” asked Harley.
“S’pose she’s dead?”

“If she is, you and I did it,” said her father.

“Bessie—Bessie!” cried the mother’s voice in agony. “Bring her to me.”

And Maurice obeyed. The girl was laid on the side of her mother’s bed: Madeline gave instructions, and Maurice executed them, while the children stood awe-stricken, near by. After a few moments, Bessie opened her eyes, and seeing the anxious faces above and about her, chiefest among which was her father’s,—fatherly tender, as no face had ever been before toward her;—lifting both hands, she covered her eyes, and again burst into hysterical crying.

“There—there,” crooned her mother, patting her

breast. Her father stood pale and trembling beside her. Harley leaned against the bed foot, sober and thoughtful. Marianna and Sadie were crying in sympathy, while Susie sat on the floor with her toes in her hands, her knees drawn up, supporting her chin, while her eyes peered out from her tangled locks, in the same wicked fashion as before. For a long time Bessie cried. The over-taxed nerves seemed to have completely given way at last; but after a while she stopped, controlling herself by a great effort; lifted herself up on the bedside; then on her feet, and without a word, went out to the kitchen. She took up the almanac which held the pledge. A glance at the comic illustrations revealed the profane spirit in which the scheme had been originated, and again the old sarcastic curl wreathed her lip for just a second; but a deep drawn sigh fluttered up, and swept it away, and the lip and chin grew tender again. She turned the pamphlet back, the covers together; got the pen and ink from the clock shelf and returned. Just inside her mother's room, stood the bureau, with an old Bible upon it. She took this down as she passed, and laid the almanac on it, and handed it to her father, saying,

“Here: let's have this done before we forget it.”

Maurice Fletcher took it from her: and wrote his name; then she passed it to her mother, who wrote hers, like one in a dream. Then laying the book on the bedside, Bessie dropped on her knees and wrote her own. Afterward she called the girls, one by one. Marianna wrote hers in a cramped hand, Sadie and Susie gave Bessie their hands to hold,

while she traced their names. Then she got up, and went to Harley.

"Here," she said: "I left a place for June and you, after mine."

Harley stood a moment looking abashed, and then ducking his head under Bessie's arm, he slid away, saying, not gruffly, but positively :

"I ain't going to sign that, Bess."

He took his hat from the floor, and went out.

Fletcher looked after his boy, until he knew that he was gone ; then turning to his wife, he said,

"Mad'line, I see what I've done, and been, and am, but I'll never touch another drop of drink. I thought I'd sign this pledge, to get Harley and the girls to do it. Maybe if I'd a known he wouldn't do it, I shouldn't have started it; but it's done now, and I'll stick to it."

"O, thank God, thank God !" said Madeline Fletcher, through her sobs.

"And I'll try to make things easier for Bessie, and you all."

"And keep away from Dem's ? " asked Bessie.

"Yes : I'll keep away from Dem's. I swear it : and before I ever break this promise, I'll come home and hang myself : I swear I will."

"Don't swear such an awful thing as that, Morry," said Madeline.

"Awful : wouldn't you rather, now ? be honest—wouldn't you rather I'd hang myself sober, than live drunk any longer ? "

"I'd rather have you live, anyhow, Morry : I'd like you to live right : but I want you to live somehow, as long as I do."

"Well: women are queer creatures. I'd think you'd rather have me out of the way, in any shape. Bess would."

Bessie did not reply, but the solemn gladness in the girl's eyes, told how full of hope was her heart, because of this whole-hearted promise of her father.

Before she slept that night, she cut the page which held the pledge, from the almanac, trimmed off neatly all the tell-tale part of the margin, and pasted it in the old Bible, that was kept in her mother's room.

CHAPTER XXXV.

HORTENSE GRAHAM was busy getting ready for her next year in school. Many things were to be done ; and she found her hands more than full, without any temperance work ; but she did get time to attend the regular meetings, and also to do some house-to-house work in her own neighborhood. Sometimes she would take some sewing in her hand, and run in to some of the poor, unclean homes about her, and talk to the mothers about their children. She had a wonderful degree of tact, and was always welcome. But the more she became acquainted with these women and their children, the more did she realize the absolute need of the W. C. T. U., and of something beside, that should do the work of a social and moral scavenger. And the more did she dread the time when her children must go away from her, even to enter school. It had been the plan of their home that the children should be educated by father and mother, until they were old enough to safely go away to college ; but all this had passed as a dream. With the first of September must come the great change to her little flock. The children must go to one part of the city, she to another. They must mingle, without protection, with the children of the unclean and vicious, as

well as of the good. They were to become a part of the mass.

The thought grew sickening, as days passed. She felt that the world must be made cleaner for them to go out in; but the time was so short. O, why had she not begun long ago! The world was altogether behindhand in its preparation for the coming of her children. It was no place for them, and yet they must go into it very soon, and take it as they found it. What would be its effect upon them? Would they be caught in the undertow of corruption? That must not be: their lives must not be contaminated. Her children must grow up spotless. They must not hear the unclean story, the impure word. Their eyes must be veiled to the hieroglyphics of sin. She must talk with them, and charge them to be blind and deaf to everything unholy.

But could they do this? Having eyes, they must see: ears, they must hear: being human, born in sin, how could they escape knowing the world as it is? Well, then, they must be taught to forget. But could they forget? The human mind was not constructed on that plan: they could not forget, they forgot nothing. It would be demanding an impossibility, and to do that, of a child, is to lose your cause at once.

O, the cry that went up out of her soul for wisdom, during these days! She could not afford to experiment in the moulding of these immortal natures; that would be to take an awful risk. She had not time to make blunders, she must go straight on, led by unerring Wisdom.

Such were her thoughts, one day, as she was coming home from the Fletchers', where she had been for an hour. Benny ran to meet her, as she came in sight, and the bright, beautiful face, the ringing tone, the clasp of his hand, burdened, even while they cheered her heart.

"Mamma, somebody's been here," said Benny.

"Is that so? Who, dear?"

"Uncle Horace; and he said he'd be glad when we was in school. And he thought you'd better stay at home and look after us, instead of running about after other folks' business."

"Did he say that?"

"Yes: and Philip told him you was looking after us all the time, when you was doin' temperance work."

"Did Philip say that? Bless his heart!"

"And Uncle Horace laughed a little, and asked how we knew that; and I told him, didn't he 'spose we knew, when you talk and pray about it all the time? It is all because you want a clean place for us: aint it, mamma? That's what I heard you say once: and I told him I thought he'd better help about it, and he got up and left, lookin' so funny. Did I say right, mamma?"

"Indeed you did, pet."

"I want a clean place, made, mamma; there are so many nasty things all over. I don't mean mud holes, like that," pointing to the wet street. "I know what it means, mamma, nasty boys, and words, that make you feel—O—worse 'n mud."

"Benny! You don't tell me that you have heard uch things?"

"I've heard lots o' things, mamma; such dirty boys!"

They had come to the door; Mrs. Graham's heart was full and cramped with pain. What if she was too late? Sin was early, up before daylight with his work. Her Benny, her baby, what of Philip? She had not an hour to lose. Forget? no such thing as forgetting; what an awful thing was this memory; like a sponge taking up foul or clean with equal facility. She must begin with this terrible potency, and train it to proper discrimination and classification of things.

"Benny dear," she said, as she paused on the threshold, "I've heard things too, and was going to talk to you all sometime; we'll begin after supper."

She opened the door and they entered the room.

"Run, Benny dear, and tell sister she may get the supper on, and you stay and help her; please close the door."

When she was alone, she dropped on her knees, and sent forth a sharp cry into the Eternal Ear.

"O, they are thy children, Father in heaven! I want to do my part well, to bring them up for Thee; but I can only do my own little part. The largest part is for Thee. O help—help me!"

All through supper-time she found it hard work to keep herself alive to the enthusiasm of the children. The fact that mamma was going to teach, and they were to be promoted from the home school to the "Big Brick," was to them a fruitful source of anticipation; to her, so painful a necessity that she could hardly endure to hear it discussed. But she must

not put herself outside of their life for a moment, so now she smiled and talked, while her heart labored heavily.

After supper the things were put away, then came the daily evening talk. First the reading, the hymn, the prayer. To-night these were all strung on the thread of her anxious thoughts, and before they came to the concert repetition of the Lord's Prayer, the children were all impressed with the fact that life was a very earnest, and just now, a very solemn thing. It seemed that something was coming—going to happen. To Philip it had the smell of battle from afar, and his mother's prayer had a suggestion of bivouac in it.

As they arose from their knees and gathered in the usual way about their mother for the talk, Benny opened the parliament by saying, "Now, mamma, you know."

"Yes, dear, I know. You see, children, Benny and I had a little talk coming home, and now," her tone grew husky, her eyes filled, "you know," she went on quickly, "you must all go to school by-and-by."

"Why, mamma, that isn't anything to feel bad about, is it?" asked Philip. He had felt his heart grow sick at her evident emotion, and spake like one greatly relieved.

"You want us to go to school, don't you?"

"Yes, dear, since I cannot teach you at home any longer. But there are other things. It is not the school, that is all right, a grand thing for us all; but there are things on the way, and all around in the big world, that are to be dreaded."

"Nasty things, Phil," said Benny, "and saloons, I s'pose."

"Sho! Ben, mamma knows better 'n to be afraid of them 'bout us, don't you, mamma?"

"I did not know any better, my son; how could I? I am afraid."

"You are! sho! you don't think we'll go into them any more, 'cause we go to school, do you?"

"No: but—"

"'Cause you know, mamma, we've learned better 'n that."

Hortense could not restrain a smile at the tone and air of experience.

"And then you know, mamma," pursued Philip, "we can't always live inside our gate, can we?"

"No, darling, and you must get ready to meet the things that are outside, because you cannot keep entirely out of their way. That is what I wanted to talk about. When you start in school, it will be the greatest change you will ever know, probably, and the manner in which you meet that, will determine the character of your whole future life."

"O mamma, don't," cried Philip, "don't look 's if you thought we was going to be bad."

"My precious boy! Did I look that way?"

"Yes; and sometimes you look so; makes me feel as if it was wrong for us to grow up."

"Is that so, dear? I did not mean it. It is not wrong for you to grow, or to go out in the world. Maybe I am too sober about this: understand me, children, I do not want you to always stay in; you have to find your place and work in the world, and

do it. You've got to know the world just as it is, and get ready for it."

"Saloons and all," said Benny.

"O—" gasped Hortense. "Y-e-s, you must. You'll have to help us about the saloons. It is dreadful to think of: but don't think mamma is unhappy about it. I think the trouble is I would like to get all the rough, hard things out of your way: but it would not be best for you. It is a good thing, I guess, that mammas can't always have their way about their children. But, about this school matter, you will go there to learn, of course, the things that cannot be taught you at home. You will learn from books, from the words of your teachers, and from people on the streets, as you go along; and from the children on the playground. Some things will be good, and some bad. You will hear words that are new, that you never heard me use, and you must remember everything you hear, or see, and I will remember what I see and hear, and we will talk it all over when we come home. We will keep our four pairs of eyes and ears open, and learn all we can, and tell each other. So we will all be scholars, and all be teachers."

"O, won't that be splendiforous!" cried Benny.

"What!"

"Splendid, and more 'n splendid," explained Benny.

"I think splendid is big enough for that. And then, when we have all brought our seeings and hearings, we will put it all into a sieve, and shake it."

"A sieve, mamma?" said Benny. "What Clem puts the flour in? Can't put words in, 'less they're on blocks or suthin'."

"Yes, we can. In the kind of sieve I mean, you can; there are different kinds of sieves, and I think your little sieve needs a little shake now, to get that big husk off of your splendid."

Benny looked at her with round eyes, while Philip and Clementine laughed.

"And the things that you said you had heard the dirty boys say. Tell me all about them, and I'll show you what I mean."

So Benny opened his sweet mouth, and out dropped filth, in the shape of woven consonants and vowels, which, set to the music of his pure, liquid tones, made his mother start, recoil, turn red, and then grow pale as death, and clasp her hands to her breast. Philip looked askance: Clementine laid her head down on her mother's shoulder. Hortense struggled against the cry that arose in her soul, which, if uttered, would have been:

"Stop! Stop! I will not hear it. If you have heard such stuff, forget it, or hide it in your own head, but you must not hear such things."

Of course he should not, but he had. His little brain seemed full of pollution. What if it had been left to fester there? She would not have believed that such things could be uttered, and the world go on just the same. Ah, she saw now how it was that sweetness grew bitter, and purity was slain, even in the lives of little children. She was deeply glad that she knew about this sluiceway through her boy's

brain. She was glad that God had led her to so carefully keep the channel open between her own life and her children's.

Benny had been startled into silence by the faces about him, and came and climbed into his mother's lap. She closed him in with her arms; she placed her lips upon his, and held them there, as if she would draw the poison out. At last, Philip said :

"You told him to, mamma."

"Yes, and I am glad he did. And you have heard such things?"

"Of course, mamma."

"How, of course?"

"Why, mamma," said Clementine, "the fence is lined with it."

"And you have heard it?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And I never dreamed it: well, children, one thing is sure, there must be no covering up of such things among us. I am so glad I know; and now for our sieve."

Benny lifted himself up, his heart relieved by the tone in which this was said: and sat looking into his mother's eyes, while she told him, in language which he could understand, about the words which he had spoken—what were profane, what unclean, and brought God's Book into the counsel. Philip, at her bidding, turned to Ephesians and read the teaching of Paul, in portions of the fourth and fifth chapters. The talk that followed, continued until long past the usual time for the children to retire. But in that hour, there was perfected the line of easy

communication between the most secret thought of these children, and the heart of this mother; and it meant peace and safety to their home, in spite of all the corruption that lined the fence about their little enclosure.

"One thing, children," said Mrs. Graham, as she was undressing Benny; "remember all these matters belong just to us—you and me: us four and no more. Our own little home, with God in it, against all the world with sin in it; that's the way we stand: you will not forget it?"

"No—no," came in a chorus.

"That means, mamma, that we are to talk about such things just to you, and nobody else," said Philip.

"Yes: just Benny and mamma: Philip and mamma: and Clementine and mamma: understand? and that anybody, old or young, boy or girl, who comes to you with any such talk, is an enemy to us all; and would stab your very soul. The reason why God made the home, with mothers and fathers and children in it together, was so that we might be protected from unclean things."

"But," said Benny, in a plaintive tone, "I'm awfully sorry, mamma, for those dirty boys. S'pose they forgot; or mebbby their mammas didn't think to tell them; an' some of 'em haint any mammas."

"Yes: I am sorry for them. I suppose some good mammas forgot to tell their boys, as I came near doing."

"Then you must tell them not to forget, you know. So Danny McGuire, and Cousin Wellen, and all of 'em can stop talking to me."

"You are right, my darling, and they shall be told."

"And when they go to climb up on the fence, and talk to me next time, I'm going to tell them to go home and talk to their mammas; that will be the way, won't it?"

"I think it will, pet; and now we will sing our good-night hymn, and go to sleep. What shall it be?"

"'I am so glad that our Father in heaven,' " said Benny, "'cause our father is in heaven, ain't he, mamma?"

This was Benny's nightly request. This one sweet hymn was sung over and over, as sure as bed-time came, and never with deeper feeling than to-night.

Hortense Graham sat in deep thought, long after the children had retired. She shuddered as she recalled some of the happenings of the day. She looked with horror upon the book of revelation which Benny's hand had opened to her. She saw that but for Benny, she would have lived in ignorance of the great danger to which her children had been exposed; for Philip already knew too much of the unclean wisdom of the world, to come frankly to her, unasked. She was thankful to God for this token of His fatherly care. Benny's remarks about the other mothers were like nails fastened in a sure place, and she found herself planning to extend the work she had been trying to do among them. Those homes where Christ is not; where drink and ignorance hold the reins: are fountains of pollution, which seek an outlet through the eye, and ear, and tongue of every

child in the city. They are converted into pipes through which the uncleanness would flow abroad. The sink must be cleansed: the pipes will bear forth to the street, whatever is in the reservoir, whether clean or foul.

"We must have organized effort for this;" she thought. "I must bring it before the Union."

While she sat thinking, her brother opened the door and came in, without so much as tapping at the door.

"I was here to-day," he began abruptly, as she arose to greet him, barely touching her hand and lips as she offered them, in sisterly fashion; "and you weren't in."

"No: I was out. I am sorry to make you trouble, if it was anything particular."

"I was particular—it is. I have been thinking about your affairs, Hortense: and I can't see how you are going to attend to these children, and provide for 'em. Now you go into school in a few days: and how can you look after them at the same time? There is only one way for you. Mother was here one day when you were out, and she agrees with me: you'll have to break up for good, and go home."

"Go home? to mother?"

"Just so: no other way. Of course you'd have to pay your board; but—"

"I never could do that: the children—"

"The children must be put out, somewhere."

"Put out?"

"Yes: you can't bring up two such boys without money, and we can't have another establishment

to see to—and beside, you don't know how. You've never had to take responsibility, and the rascals will get away with you, and disgrace the family. I know enough about boys with my one, to know something of what you will have to do to undertake this. I thought I'd wait till—till you'd got sort o' used to the change in things, and began to chirk up a bit, before I said anything; and the way you're gadding about now, I made up my mind I needn't wait any longer."

"I don't understand you, Horace," said Mrs. Graham, swallowing her indignation as well as she could.

"Well, it's just this: I know some parties who will take the children and bring them up, not in style, but teach them to work, and make good, respectable people of them. And you are to close up here and go home to father's to board. Your salary, as a teacher, will support you, and leave you something, after expenses are paid, to lay by for a rainy day, and—"

"I understand," she said, "and I assure you you have lost your time. Nothing but God shall separate my children from me. I shall keep them with me in a home of our own, be it ever so small, and shall support them, and bring them up myself."

"You can't do it."

"I can, and will. I have a divine commission—"

"A divine humbug!"

"Horace! You cannot talk this way here. I am a woman, with a woman's right to my children and home."

"What then do you propose?"

"To do the best I can, and trust in God."

"You're not trusting God, supposing there is any such, but tempting Him. But I have nothing more to say. Go your own way to destruction. You needn't expect any help from me."

He had not removed his hat, so that he had nothing to do but open the door and go out. The door had no sooner shut, than all three children leaped up in their beds.

"I knew he didn't come for any good to-day," said Philip, "I wish he'd keep away from here."

"Philip, dear," said Hortense, going to the children, and sitting down among them, "were you children awake? I thought you had gone to sleep."

"He woke us up, I guess," said Philip. "So he thinks you can't bring us up, does he? That's all he knows about it."

"Who can, if you can't?" said Clementine.

"Can't we be brought up?" whined Benny, who was blinking his sleepy eyes.

"'Course we can: don't be silly, Ben; mamma could bring up a thousand children."

"O, a thousand?" corrected Clementine.

"Yes, a thousand, if God wanted her to, couldn't you, mamma?"

"If God required it of me, I could."

"Then of course you can bring up us three little ones," said Benny, turning back on his pillow.

"Yes, dear, I can;" her voice trembled with a weight of joy, which this fact gave her. "I can."

"They needn't worry, need they?" said Philip.

"No, they need not worry ; but it is certain that we must all work together, and be willing to deny ourselves. We can't have things as we would if our papa had stayed. Mamma must earn the money for everything, and each one of you must help."

"Of course, mamma," said Clementine, "we will."

"I'll do my part," said Philip, positively.

"And," cried Benny, springing up and pounding his pillow, to emphasize his words, "I'll do my part. Why, I can do lots o' things : I can saw wood like—like everybody."

"You'll have to do something harder than that, my dear."

The children all stared, and Benny stopped his gymnastics, and looked dubiously at her ; then turning to Philip, with an exultant tone, he cried :

"O, Phil, it's got to be harder 'n sawing wood !"

"Shall I tell you what it is ?" asked mamma.

"Yes, please."

"You'll have to take care of Benny for me : my strong, restless, impetuous Benny."

"O !"

"You'll have to see that he does not run in the streets, that he keeps out of all bad places, that he does not use bad words, and that he does as Clementine wants him to, when mamma is away ; and that will be the hardest thing of all. Clementine must be the housekeeper, and we must all do what she wants us to. My work will take all my time, yet I can do it easily, if you will do, so that I shall never have to wonder if anybody knows something about my chil-

dren that I don't know, and that they don't dare tell me, for fear I'd feel bad. That would make my heart so weak, that it would end just as Uncle Horace is afraid it will ; but you are God's children : we are all of us together, and we must not be separated. I am your sister-mother ; God is my Father, too, and we will each try to do our own part of the work, won't we ? ”

“ There'll be a good deal to 'member,” said Benny.

“ Yes : it will be all you can do.”

“ Well, I'll try ; but don't you s'pose you'd better put it all in a book for me ? ”

“ I don't need to do that, darling, for our Father did that very thing in the Bible.”

“ Not 'bout running out in the street, and goin' into saloons, and talking, and all that ? ”

“ O yes : don't you remember papa's old text ? Sister and Philip will, about doing as Jesus would if He were in your place : ‘ As He is, so are we in this world. ’ ”

“ O, that does mean that, don't it ? ”

“ Of course.”

“ Well, I can do that ; and I'll do what Clem tells me, unless, mamma, she should tell me something 't I know you wouldn't want me to do ; that would be like what you said once, that if you should forget and tell me something that God told us in His Book not to do, I must do His way and not yours, do you 'member ? ”

“ Yes ; and that is right.”

“ And say, mamma, there'll be some times when I'll have to know all my own self. Say ! that's what

Wellen says, guess I learned that o' him ; but I will, won't I, have to know all alone what's right, because there won't be anybody around to tell me."

" Yes, dear."

" Well, what's a little s-l-e-e-p-y boy to do, then ? O, I know—pray—p-p-r-r—" and he was asleep, sure enough.

They all laughed a little soft laugh at Benny's taking off, and their hearts all grew very tender as they looked upon the beautiful face of the dear little giant, who with all his peculiar physical strength was so sweet, and so proud of his right to his mother's knee.

" Mamma," at last said Philip, " I don't wonder Llewellyn acts so ; I'm glad Uncle Horace aint my father. I always feel puckery when I see him."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

CLIFTON was suddenly thrown into commotion. There was to be a state election in the Fall, and the political canvass had begun ; and the State W. C. T. U. had resolved to make a move toward securing a Constitutional Prohibitory Amendment. They had sent out petitions which the Local Unions were expected to circulate.

Hortense Graham was glad that this work came before she was obliged to begin her school, for she longed to help in something that should promise the immediate extinction of the saloon. This effort created a great deal of interest, and no little excitement in the city. It was discussed with the political issues everywhere. Mr. Date was much exercised, especially when he knew that his sister was engaged in it. He did not wish to be in any way involved in such a movement. He did not say much in the factory, as yet, for he felt that Hollis Ellenwood would be with the Petitioners, and he could not ignore the weight of his personal influence among the men. He only hoped that somehow they would pass him by, or he be able to keep out of their way. Among business men who thought as he did, he was free in his condemnation of it. He did not think it belonged to

women to meddle with legal matters. He thought the men could be trusted a while yet, and that something should be done to protect them from the invasion of these Petitioners in their streets. In an informal council which they held, it was agreed that every man among them should use the full measure of his influence, power, or authority, with the women whom he knew as involved in this, to stop the raid. Some of these gentlemen had wives who were in the Union, and they pledged each other that they would keep them out of it. Others must limit their interference to polite tactics, entirely. Mr. Date had before him the task of keeping his sister from "making a fool of herself."

The next day she was passing the factory, intending to cross over to Union Hall opposite. Mr. Date was in the doorway, and as he answered her good morning, he said,

"Hortense, come in to the office. I have something I must say to you."

Hortense turned, gave him her hand, lifted her lips to be kissed, and went in.

Horace handed her a seat, swung his swivel chair about, seated himself before her, and said,

"Have I been correctly informed, Hortense? Are you gadding about with those petitions?"

"If that is what you call it, Horace, I am."

"Well then, you must just stop it."

Hortense felt her blood begin to rise, her cheeks flushed, and it was only by a mighty effort that she restrained an angry reply. But she knew her brother well enough to know that words would not help her

cause with him. She did not wish to hear him, and after a second, she arose.

"Sit down:" he said, "you must hear what I have to say."

"Very well," she said. "I will hear you; but Horace, please remember I am not a child."

"I will, when you cease to act like one. Now, these are the facts in the case. We business men have talked things over, and of course we don't suppose you women want to just ruin everything, but you're going to do it, if you keep on." He paused a moment, then resumed. "Some o' them were sanguine enough to think 'twould do some good to try to explain matters to the women, but I—I don't s'pose when we've done it, it'll make one bit o' difference."

"I think we would listen to reason," said Hortense, quietly.

"Well, if you would just keep out of it all, you might have lot's o' friends among the business men, if you'd just attend to your own affairs. You are held in high regard, and the vote was unanimous for you in the school board. They all agreed that we need just such a woman, a motherly, experienced woman in the school. These men, Charley's old friends, and all, would be really hurt to have anything happen to you, or see you jeopardize your interests by any foolishness."

He paused and sat leaning forward on his elbows, twirling his thumbs. Hortense had nothing to say, though her face had grown pale again. Horace Date had a feeling that he had made a poor beginning. Suavity was not one of his graces, but he thought he

had better try it—if he expected this woman, his sister, to hear him through. And she must hear him. So he went on in a different tone.

“Hortense—I’d like to see you do well. Your children are very promising: and you can’t afford to spoil their chance in the world. Why, there will be dozens of places open for those boys as soon as they’re big enough, if you do as you ought to. Now Mr. Witherspoon, he said that he was certain that you do not understand what is involved in this petition, because you are a sensible woman. He was sure you would not join the female insurrectionists if you did. You have been praised not a little because you did not go in with that W. C. T. U. business, but now folks begin to say it was because Charley kept you out.”

“He did not—he—”

“So I thought I would just tell you how the matter stands, and why we are opposed to this petition. It is just this way. We all recognize this liquor business as an evil: a very great evil; so great that we cannot let it have its own way entirely, like a wild horse; that would be madness; Hortense, madness:” and Mr. Date gave his chair a hitch forward. “But it will go on; it is beyond the power of man to stop it, unless we could kill off the present race, and import a new one, that had no use for the stuff. Look at Maine, Prohibition Maine; why, more whiskey is bought and sold there than in any other State in the Union. Men will have it, and as long as they will drink it it’s going to be sold—no help for it; and it is absolutely necessary that men who work as hard as we must

in these days, to keep up with the times, should have stimulants of some kind. Pastor Somerfield said that, only last Sunday. You ought to hear what he thinks of your petition."

He paused again, but Hortense said nothing, so he went on.

"So, 's I said before, you must kill us all off, and bring in a new lot before you can stop this traffic. Speaking of killing, I'm not the only one who thinks that your foolishness about the doctors killed Charley. He'd 'a been a live man to-day, if Doctor Rust had not been sent off, and that milk sop, Clieves, given the case."

Still Hortense was silent.

"That's the situation," went on her brother. "Now, just what shall we do about it? The best thing possible, of course: you would agree to that. Of two evils choose the least, always."

"No, never!" cried Hortense. "Of two evils, we choose neither, every time."

"That's just like the silly women," said Horace Date, with sublime contempt. "Well, if you don't choose them, you'll have to take them as they come; and, as I was saying, I believe in getting ready for anything that's got to come."

"So do I," said Hortense. "And this is something you must get ready to meet, as you would an enemy, a robber, an assassin."

Horace Date shifted a little in his chair, but went on:

"We've been getting ready in this city to take care of anything that comes. If something comes

that we don't want, and will stay, we will get all we can out of it, make it serve us, in spite of itself. If we can't prohibit the liquor traffic, why, the next thing is to control it by law, by the strong arm of the law."

"Anything that can be controlled, can be disposed of, cast out utterly," said Hortense.

"By the strong arm of the law compel it to keep within bounds, and serve us," said Horace Date, ignoring her remark.

"If it can be kept within bounds," said Hortense, "it can be put bodily outside of the city, and commonwealth, and nation; shut up in Hades, where it belongs."

"Don't be a fool, Hortense: you certainly talk like one: will you hear me out, or not?"

"Certainly; I am learning something: go on."

"Well, then, don't interrupt with nonsense. It costs something to apply the power of the law, to make a boundary anywhere, even in Hades, whatever that may be; hence we will tax the sale of this stuff, that will be sold anyhow, law or no law; license it within certain limits, for a sum which will, at least, partly cover this expense, and—"

"Will you please tell me what license means, Horace?"

"Means? Why it means—a—it means—"

"Allow me, please: here is your Webster, let us have it just as it is," and Hortense took the volume from its rack, and turned to the place, and read:

"'LICENSE—noun. 1. Leave; permission; authority or liberty given to do or forbear any act. 2. A

certificate giving permission or authority ; as a marriage license. 3. Excess of liberty, exorbitant freedom, freedom abused, or used in contempt of law or decorum.'

" 'LICENSE—verb-transitive. 1. To permit by grant of authority ; to remove legal restraint by a grant of permission. 2. To authorize to act in a particular character. 3. To dismiss.'

" 'LICENSED —Permitted by authority.' "

Hortense Graham lifted her eyes from the book to her brother's face. He sat pale with annoyance, still twirling his thumbs.

"Do you really think, Horace," she said, "that the best thing the business men of this city can do with a traffic which they acknowledge to be wholly evil, is to permit it, by grant of authority, to act in its own peculiar, ruinous character? To remove legal restraint by grant of permission?"

"Hortense," he cried, with impatience, "we do not remove legal restraint from the saloon: we only license within certain limits."

"Certainly, for instance, that it may sell to any but a minor, or to a drunkard, and at any time but on Sunday, or election day, or after ten o'clock at night."

"Yes: and if you temperance folks would spend your energies in the enforcement of the law as it is, you would get all the prohibition you would want."

"Horace, you are not ignorant of the efforts that have been made. Temperance people believed this once. I was not a W. C. T. U. woman, but I was a temperance woman, and I kept track of these efforts.

Charley was on the committee for the enforcement of the law. You know how utterly futile was every attempt, how the law-breakers boasted of their ability to evade, and annul the prohibitory clause, under cover of the license portion of the law. How they laughed at the cranks, who thought they could get satisfaction out of saloon-keepers, for illegal liquor-selling. And they had a right to laugh: it was a farce. Your law is like a train with a locomotive on either end, each pulling, under full head of steam, one up, and the other down the road, and the result depends on the grade. Unfortunately, whenever there is a grade up, there is a grade down as well. The incline is to the pit of ruin in this case, and your train is dashing down in spite of all the puffing of your prohibitory engine, and dragging it, the very best legal expression you have given, with it to the jumping-off place."

"Ouite a pretty figure, my dear, I must say," laughed Mr. Date, derisively.

"Not a figure, but the truth. And now, since you introduced the subject, please let me go on. I have turned the dictionary to another word: let me read.

"**PROHIBIT**—verb-transitive. 1. To forbid; to interdict by authority; to inhibit—to disallow. 2. To hinder—to debar—to prevent—to preclude."

"These two principles of license and prohibition stand in relation to each other, as do the two poles—forever eternally opposed, the one to the other. This is the natural order—yet the spirit which is in the liquor traffic has undertaken to overturn the natural order of things, and compel these two opposites to

swing out of the straight line of truth, deviate to that extent, that these extremes may meet and be welded together. Do you know what happens when you bring the two poles of a battery together?"

Mr. Date did not answer.

"The current of life and power is shut off: and that is just what has happened with this law of yours. You have attempted to join the poles, so that no one could tell just where license ends and prohibition begins, and the result is legal inertia. Let the current have its way, and you have power; but it will not endure to be doubled over on itself."

"But," interrupted Mr. Date, smilingly, "your own figure defeats you: if you would apply electricity as a remedy, you must take one pole in each hand, and so connect the current in yourself. The body politic is sick: we don't deny that it needs just this remedy of the union of the opposite currents of the law."

"By no means—the currents are not opposite. The current comes in from one side like a stream, and flows and passes out at the other. Prohibition is the positive pole, License the negative, and all along the entire line, the positive is after the negative, chasing it into the depths toward the central fires. Your law might be represented by two puppets operated by this current on a circle, chasing each other around and around, just so far apart forever. The order cannot be reversed—to do it would be to break up the foundations of the universe, and reduce us to chaos."

"I had no idea you were so philosophical, Hor-tense," said Mr. Date, with a sneer. "Philosophy is

good in its place ; but in the affairs of the government of this very practical world, we need something beside philosophy. We have gotten away from the object for which I asked this interview. I simply want that you should not ruin yourself, and your children, and me, by joining this meddlesome horde of women, who are filling the country with confusion. As I intimated, you are regarded as a wise and faithful woman. Your position in the school was given you because of this. There were other candidates ; but the Board, to quote one of them, ‘appreciated your quiet, womanly life,’ as well as your needs, and now—”

He paused—she sat with burning cheeks ; he looked at her for a moment, then resumed.

“Of course you are my sister ; I am bound to help you, in spite of yourself ; but I can’t answer for the course that may be pursued by the other gentlemen of the Board. And beside, you, as my sister, may seriously injure me as a business man, if you persist in this. The men of influence are opposed to it ; they will not tolerate it ; and every man and woman is being spotted ; do you understand ?”

“I do ; so well, that I am ready to say to you that never before did I know the enemy with which we have to do ; never did I hate it as I do at this moment. As for my situation as a teacher, I have nothing to say. As for my temperance work, I have enlisted for life. I have cast in my lot with the cause, and am ready to take anything which comes to me because of it.”

“You don’t know what you are saying,” said Mr. Date, in a low, emphatic tone.

"I think I do ; at any rate, I trust the unknown to my God. I shall never cease my part in this effort to get rid of the saloon, while I have breath."

Then was Horace Date angry. He arose and beat the floor with rapid strides up and down. It was an occasion for oaths, but, somehow, he did not utter them. He had a notion to turn her out of the office, but did not. She sat still, as if waiting for him to speak again ; and, at length, he paused before her, and clinching his fist, said :

"Well, you will find out that we'll be too much for you : we men. We may not be good for much, but we intend to run this government, and you'll have to put up with us. And if you women are not satisfied, what are you going to do about it, that's all ?"

There was something in this question much like a slap in the face. But it was also practical, and must be met. What could they do ? This was not the first petition from the women to the law-makers. Again and again had Hortense Graham written her name to some prayer from Clifton women ; but what had come of it all ? Men had been gotten sober, and given good positions, only to fall the deeper. Men had voted for no license one year, and for license the next. Christian men, in spite of God's Word, or their own prayers, voted for the saloon. Aunt Gracia had said that she did not expect the present petition to do anything more than to keep the agitation going. The Legislature would have to be made over before it would allow the people to vote on this question, and the people would have to

be made over, before they would vote for Prohibition, if they had ever so good a chance. Nothing but votes could save us: but where were the votes? Against us. Nothing but votes could undo the mischief votes had done. And the case was desperate. What could women do? They had no resource.

She sat spell-bound by the awfulness of the situation. Then, suddenly, her brother's suggestion about killing off the present race, and importing a new one, flashed upon her. It was like a ray of electric light. In it she saw, out of it she spoke.

"That's so!" she cried. "I see it, Horace: this will we do. The suggestion is yours; thank you, for it; I never saw before what we have to do. Whiskey will do the killing fast enough, and we must do the importing. Horace. The 'Woman's Christian Temperance Union,' is an organization of mothers. Woman means mother. The maidenly mother of us all, is a type of the rest, who for lack of children of their own bodies, reach out after all humanity, to gather it, Christ-like, and brood it, as a hen gathers her chickens, when the hawk swoops down. We have boys growing up: mine are but two of the millions: they are pretty young, yet, but that is a defect that time will remedy. Give us fifteen, twenty, or twenty-five years, and by our mothers and teachers, from the crude material, as it comes into our hands, out of the cradles of the nation, we will develop a majority that will snow the liquor traffic under, with a pure man's clean ballot, so deep that it shall never know a resurrection. We will teach, TEACH, TEACH the truth, and truth is

against you and your law: and you, Horace, and your business men, that you tell about, must get ready to take the consequences of a sowing of the truth in the brains of the children, that are already on the way. I'll tell the women. O, it is grand! I never saw it before. Keep your saloon and license law as long as you can: hold on to it, if you will: but it shall go to its own place, crowded out by the crowding in of a new power (just as the positive crowds out the negative) which will not give it room. Will you go with it? Be crowded out, Horace, or stay with us?"

She had arisen: these words were uttered with the force of eloquence. Horace Date was startled, electrified; and in this moment of exaltation, he saw as she did. This was practical. The women of the land made its men. A sowing of truth must kill the saloon and the laws by which it lives. The ballot in the hands of a race of men, developed from a motherhood of this type, would become a fearful weapon against sin, against the selfishly ambitious; and surely the conditions of human life would be improved. And yet—

That "and yet" was the effort of self-interest to re-adjust the blind over his eyes. But draw the bandage never so closely, he could be a blind man no longer. He might be stubborn, but he must see.

"Well," he said, at length, with a sardonic laugh, "I think that would be a practical way out of the difficulty. I would advise you to do it: it will keep you out of mischief. You women go to work and educate a generation that will not drink liquor, and

of course, there will be no demand, and the saloons will disappear, and all laws for or against it will be obsolete."

"What, then, shall mothers teach the boys about their fathers, who will drink?—who will vote to permit the saloon, by grant of authority, to act in its own peculiar character, as a destroyer?"

Mr. Date colored, and looked so conscience-smitten and yet stubborn, that Hortense was sorry for him, and yet she went on:

"Your own boy must learn the truth, Horace, and it is time, for his own sake. And when he comes to know how closely he has run to ruin by following you, how will he classify you? When he finds out what real manhood and real manly power mean, and then comes to measure you by the standard? When he tries to come up to what he sees he may be, and do his work as a citizen, don't let him have to put his foot on your neck, Horace, and rise a whole man's length above his own father, to be a man, and cast a true man's vote. I am going to come to you before long, with my petition. I shall give you a chance to sign it yourself, and take it to your men."

She did not wait for even a look, after this, but with a brightly spoken:

"Good morning, Horace," she went out.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HORTENSE GRAHAM went to the next meeting of the W. C. T. U. with her heart and brain crowded full of these things, so grand as she saw them, that she was overawed, as at a revelation of God.

As soon as the president announced the order of "new business," she arose, and addressing the chair, unfolded to the assembled women the plan of education, to which she had, in that moment of inspiration, pledged the Union.

"This education," she said, "must include both the mother and the child, both teacher and pupil. I think the women and children are left almost alone, to work out this problem, from the human side, but God and truth are in it, and the result is sure. The world wants men, and we must make them: a majority who will stand for purity and truth. I have been looking into it. We must employ science. She will be a wonderful ally. We must compel every boy to take his first cigarette, or glass of cider, in the full knowledge of all it will do to his blood, and nerves, and brain. We must make him see it so clearly that he shall bear the responsibility of a ruined life alone.

"Before he begins to earn, or spend money, long before he begins to think of party issues that divide votes, he must learn of the influence of the saloon, on both capital and labor; on taxation as well as revenue. We must begin at once to train a race of true politicians; who shall fully understand the science of government; and who, from principles of true statesmanship, will destroy the liquor traffic.

"I confess to you, ladies, that I never, until this week, had any idea of the wonderful scope of the work which God has given to us. It is no new work, either; it is old as the word which came to Eve, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. It is grand, and tender, and sweet. More like the making of the dainty wardrobe, and setting the house in order for the coming of a little child into the home, while the mother is conscious of the hidden life, and knows that the garments she is making, are to wrap the limbs of the future King. A queen mother is the W. C. T. U. In her arms is the heir apparent to the throne. We must get ready for the new Christmas, when Christ shall be born into the business and politics of the world. I was never so glad to be a woman and a mother, as since this revelation came to me."

Hortense had touched a key that resounded, with long vibrations, in every woman's heart. It was to them as the roll of the drum, and call of the bugle. There was no question as to whether these things should be done, but simply how to accomplish the largest results in the shortest time.

Mrs. Price, in the remarks that followed Hortense,

said one thing that startled her as well as many others.

"I have learned things of late," she said, "which make me fear that we will have to wait for more than one generation, to come and go, before this hope can be realized. The corruption among children is terrible. We cannot at once, out of any material already in hand, raise up a majority of clean thinkers, even among women. The mothers of the next generation are already tainted with the impurity which lies like open moral sewers, all about us. If we have not mothers who are capable of producing clean politicians, we must make them. And we must not forget the fathers. Fathers must be made afraid to go on steeping themselves in tobacco, alcohol and uncleanness. Fathers must be taught that, as Aunt Gracia has taught us, tobacco in one generation, calls for alcoholics in the next, by an unchanging law, just as surely as salt calls for water."

There was no controversy, but much discussion, out of which it was decided to make two departments, one of work among mothers and fathers, and one among children.

Hitherto the work of the W. C. T. U. of Clifton had been almost entirely for drinking men and women; all following in the wake of Aunt Gracia's apostolic leadership; but often had they been made to feel how terrible were the odds against them, with the fiery appetite within, and the temptations without. They began to realize, that imperative as was the need of reformatory agencies, yet other things must be done, than simply trying to save the drunkard of

to-day. The saloon and the drinking man were fixtures in this generation, in spite of all that could be done by the women, and the few good men who were in sympathy with them. The "lurking places of the villagers," were traps; and the weak must fall into them; and, in order that the legatee of the demoniac thirst, should ever find a soft path for his feet, this work of education was absolutely necessary. The intellect must be brought in contact with the truths which concern the business world. The conscience must be trained to a true understanding of God's word. The mother must be taught why her children came into the world with certain peculiarities of character, as well as of feature and form; and also how to mould the future statesman, artisan, or laborer, or housekeeper after the divine ideal. Also must she be taught how to overcome in those already entering upon their inheritance, the deformities of mind and spirit, even as science is learning to reduce the deformities of bone and sinew. The teaching of a selfish system of religion, a perversion of God's free gospel by His Son, must be overcome, superceded by the simple truth plainly taught. These women did not believe that God was in any sense a party to sin, an abettor of the traffic in human virtue; any more than He endorsed the sword, and the rack, and the thumb screw, as agencies for the conversion of heretics. The ladies went out that day, with a new inspiration shining in every face. It had been decided to call the children of the city together, and organize them into something that would interest and

hold them until they could be taught the facts, upon which life and purity depended.

Hortense Graham was appointed to this work, with Annie Dayton to assist.

Annie walked home with Hortense, that they might consult together about plans.

"We wonder about you, these days, Hortense," said Annie. "We all have thought it a marvel that Aunt Gracia could carry so much work so lightly, but even she says she don't see how you do it."

"Yes? of course I find no time to waste. I must cut my days into sections, squares, so to speak, and have abandoned much that I once thought necessary. But O, I do find so much in my work; I can't tell you, Annie, the joy of it."

"That is true; the compensation of it, who can tell? But, what will you do when you begin school, with your little children? They must be such a care?"

"They are no care; they are my helpers. My Benny is my strong staff: my Philip is my beautiful rod: and Clementine is just the little house-mother that her papa called her."

"Yes, I know: but the work; the housekeeping. It must be different without your good Nora; and then when you are in school."

"I do not anticipate any trouble. Clementine takes all the care of the house, and—"

"That little darling?"

"Yes:" and the mother's face glowed as she talked of her beautiful child.

"But she must go to school? Pardon these many

questions: but somehow, we haven't been able to question before."

"No: I was shut up with my pride and selfishness, until this blessed work led me out. Question; I am glad to have you. I want you to know; shall I tell you our plan? for we have one, all cut and dried."

"Do: I have been just sick to know what you would do."

"Well, I'll just give you the day's programme as it will be; all is now, as near as it can be, with the school left out. We arise at six: Clementine gets the breakfast: I put the house in order; the boys dress each other, and help us everywhere. We have "short prayers," as Benny calls them; just a verse around from the Bible: a hymn, and the Lord's prayer, as we sit at the table. After breakfast, I shall always have time for a little mending, or sewing on the machine. At eight, I start out for my day's work, whatever it is. We do not have a regular dinner at noon, but lunch, and supper at six, which Clementine and the boys get on the table; then prayers, and bed at eight for the children."

"Don't they rebel at that?"

"No; for we voted on the plan—we discussed it pro and con, and voted, and it is theirs to do their part, and mine to do my part, so that we may keep together, and have a home, you see. It was voted that my bed-time should be ten, unless it was necessary for me to sit up later."

"But don't they have tiffs, now, that they are all together? It must be different from what it was

when Clement was alone; she's such a gentle creature, anyhow."

"They have their own naughty times, but they do not disobey. They are on their honor, and are helping to keep a home, don't you see?"

"I see."

"And they know that if they do not help in the way agreed upon, I cannot keep a home. They have a horror of being separated. If they do ever forget, and get reckless, as is natural, something is always sure to happen to make them afraid of the danger of it."

"But I don't see how you got all this into their minds so young: how, or when you began."

"I began early: beforehand. They have never known anything else. They were given to God, in the first dawn of life, and have been led in His way ever since—only for a while after we were left alone, I came near bringing disaster upon it all, but God mercifully saved me."

They had come in sight, and Benny bounded out to meet them, and led them in to supper, which was ready. The table was neatly laid, with a very plain, but toothsome repast. Philip occupied the place at the head of the table, and did the carving and serving in a manner so natural and easy, that Annie could but respect the little man. Benny served the butter, cutting it into nice squares; Clementine poured the milk: while mamma dished the fruit.

The children took their part in the conversation in their own way, without reproof. Their simple comments and questions receiving the same attention

that they were expected to give to their elders. It was a beautiful system, that was for the first time revealed to Miss Annie. Intimate as she was with the Grahams, she had never before seen them under circumstances that brought the inner domestic life so to the surface.

The ladies soon began the discussion of the plan for the work among the children of the city, and at once these children fired with enthusiasm.

"I know some boys who'd go into it," said Philip, "Malcolm and Rupert Sloan."

"Yes:" said Clementine, "Malcolm will — but Rupert, I don't know about him: he abuses Shep so—"

"Rup smokes," said Benny.

"Well, Malcolm is one of the nicest boys," said Philip; "he don't use any bad words. Rupert is different, but, then, he's lame."

"Well, he needn't smoke, if he is lame."

"And he feels bad 'bout something, all the time," said Philip; who was learning a gentle sympathy for weak boys. "I feel sorry for Rup: and I'm going to try to get him to come, sha'n't I, mamma?"

"Yes, indeed: he is one of the very boys we want."

"Will you let him smoke, mamma?" asked persistent Benny.

"We'll get him to promise not to smoke: I dare say that is one thing that makes him feel bad."

"It ought to," said Benny: "I don't like to see him, he's so white and crawn'y, and so wet around his mouth, and eyes—augh! Malcolm is bully, though."

"What?"

Benny looked up quickly at his mother.

"Malcolm is what?"

"Bully: I said."

"What does that mean?"

"Why; it means—it means that he is strong, and brave—and—and I like him."

"It means then, that you think he is a fine boy?"

"Yes'm."

"Well, that is good, I am sure. Malcolm is a fine boy; is that it?"

"Yes'm; but everybody says bully, mamma."

"Did you ever hear mamma say it?"

"No; because that ain't a word for ladies."

"Why not for ladies?"

"O—cos—it's a sort o'—'taint nice 'nough."

"Would you think a lady was nice, that said it?"

"No!" The tone was short and positive.

"Well, I think a boy has just as good a right to the nice clean words as any lady; and any mamma has a right to use any word that is nice for any boy or gentleman, don't you?"

"Yes'm: I s'pose I caught that, somewhere."

"Well, when you catch a ball, you can throw it away, can't you?"

"Yes'm—way up high."

"And you can throw away a word that you have caught."

"Like a corn that wouldn't go through the sieve?" said Benny, laughing.

"Yes: just that way. I'm glad that you like Mal-

colm, Benny, and we must ask him to help us get the boys, and Janie the girls."

"Bessie, and June, and all of them must come," said Clementine, "but I do feel so dreadfully bad 'bout Bessie."

"Well, Harley Fletcher ain't a bit nice," said Benny.

"I guess he's as nice as he knows how to be," said Philip, "and maybe if you had such a drunken father, you wouldn't be any nicer."

"Mebbe then, 'twas a good thing my father went to heaven, for I heard a man say that he'd a drunk if he'd got well."

A spasm of agony swept the face of Hortense, and Annie Dayton's eyes filled with quick tears. They both knew that this was the very thing that Charles Graham feared for himself, so intensely, that he was sure it was better that he went away, into a land where prohibition of all evil is in force.

Benny went on, clinching his fist.

"I just wish I was a man, and I'd make this whiskey get out, I tell you, I would. O, I just feel so," and he ground his teeth together, "every time I think of it."

"That is just what we expect you boys will do," said Hortense, steadying her tone as well as she could. "We are waiting for you as patiently as we can."

"Mamma, how soon will I be a man?"

"It will be fourteen years before you can vote."

"O—what a time! I'm afraid whiskey'll do lot's o' trouble, 'fore that—but Phil—you'll vote?"

"Yes, sir," said quiet Philip, with a radiant face. "I'll vote in ten years. I'll vote four times before you do once, if you are the biggest."

Benny was nonplussed : but after one silent second, he cried :

"Well, I tell you, Phil, when you get there you can hit the old thing hard, and you will be a little man, so I'll be there to boost, and we'll kill him : we'll have to have guns or suthn', though."

"Your guns will be ballots, dear," said mamma.

"Ballots for guns !" and the children laughed.

"What 'll we load 'em with ?" cried Benny.

"Ideas ! Ballots for guns, ideas for bullets."

And the children fairly screamed with laughter.

"That gives me an idea, Hortense," said Annie. "Let us organize the boys into a cold water army, uniform them, and equip them with wooden guns."

"O-o-o !" cried the children, clapping their hands.

"I think that is an inspiration, Annie," said Hortense ; "we will do that very thing."

"Shall we girls have guns, too ?" asked Clementine.

"No, you can't vote ; it's voters that have guns," said Philip.

"Well, we ought to, I think," said Clementine. "Don't you, mamma ?"

"That is just a little farther than I can go," said Mrs. Graham, "though Aunt Annie would say yes. But I think the girls might be a 'Relief Corps.'"

"I know one boy who won't enlist in the army," said Philip. "Llewellyn Date, if he is my cousin."

"If the right one should ask him, he might," said mamma.

"He wouldn't care who asked him: he don't like anybody but Lady March."

"Yes, he does," said Benny. "He likes Malcolm Sloan. He'd do anything for Mal."

"Well, then, we must get Malcolm to ask him."

They arose from the table, and Annie said:

"Do you know, Hortense, these children have wrought out our plan for us! I was wondering how and what we should do, but it is all as clear now as a bell. Children in a home are regular teachers, aren't they?"

"Indeed they are. I have my best and most practical lessons in Christian living, and everything, nearly, by talking to these little folks of mine."

"But we don't help you when we're naughty, do we?" observed Benny.

"You help me when you're trying not to be naughty, and I guess that is most all the time, isn't it?"

"Yes, most; but I 'spose other times you most wish we'd go to heaven."

Benny was kissed and sent out to do his part of the work, to which the others had already gone, and Mrs. Graham and Annie Dayton sat down to perfect their plan.

"That idea of the guns is splendid," said Annie; "it will just catch the boys, and the legend,

'Our guns are ballots,
Our bullets are ideas,'

just caps the climax. It is the very sentiment. We will get the guns, and then go to work to load up with the ammunition of truth, out of God's magazine, unless, indeed, my dear Auntie should object to the guns."

The plan was brought before the Union at its next meeting. Aunt Gracia did object, at first, to the war-like preparation, but when the matter was thoroughly canvassed, and she saw how the boys were taken with the idea, she said :

"The Lord, He is undoubtedly a man of war: and, Annie, thee shall have thy way. I will keep my scruples to myself, and if the uniform, and wooden guns, and the parade will help to put down King Alcohol, I'll take off my bonnet, and cheer as lustily as anybody, as the army goes marching by. Anything to save the boys and girls."

It was decided to enlist boys between the ages of ten and sixteen; and Philip Graham had the proud satisfaction of finding, that for once, years had the precedence of size. He was enrolled, and made a lieutenant, while Benny, who was not yet ten, had to stand on the sidewalk and see him march by in his uniform, and refused to be comforted.

The amount of enthusiasm engendered by the display of guns, and banners, and soldier caps, and belts, among the boys of Clifton, was out of all proportion with the real temper and sentiment of the male population. For once the women seemed to be having everything their own way.

Llewellyn Date was caught, at once, by the popular tide, and made captain of Company A, and

beautiful Lady March was drafted into service. Harley Fletcher stood out, because of the pledge, for days; but at length, to the joy of all the home folks, his craving for a part in the grand show of color, and music, and march, overcame him, and he yielded to the spell which was cast over him, and took it, pledge and all, and was rewarded by a corporal's chevron. There was too much of the soldier in these sons of the war veterans, to allow them to stand back at such a time as this. Malcolm Sloan was captain of Company B; and after deliberation, Fred. Knight, who had come in, to the surprise of all, bringing a horde of boys with him, was elected captain of Company C.

Three full companies of a hundred men each, stood in hollow square on the Court House green, at the end of two weeks work, to take together, the oath of allegiance to temperance, which each had taken by himself, when he received his gun and uniform. The girls, five hundred strong, stood near by, wearing the company colors, in sash and shoulder knot. Among them were June and Marianna Fletcher, with Clementine Graham, and Janet Sloan, besides all the Clifton girls whom we know, between the ages of eight and sixteen; and many whom no one seemed to know but who had come in because the tide had lifted them off their feet, and borne them along with the current. All Clifton had come out to witness the spectacle. Hortense Graham was the inspiration of it all, the observed of every eye, as she walked with Annie Dayton at her side to the centre of the hollow square.

One person, perhaps, however, drew many eyes

with even a deeper interest than she. Maurice Fletcher had consented to act as drill master to the volunteers. He was well versed in tactics, and the sight of the boys, as they stood ready to be formed into ranks, one evening, as he was going home from work, had so thrilled him, that he could not resist the call to take this living mass and shape it. And this evening, he stood before them, sober, soldierly, even proud, because his boy and girls were numbered with this host.

He did not know yet, neither did they, all that this uprising portended, or all that was to be done for these young lives: and by them. But he did share with them in the enthusiasm of the hour.

"Takes one back to '61," remarked one, to Horace Date, who stood leaning on the fence, interested in the fact that his boy was in it.

"Yes—'ts so: it's wonderful."

"Wonderful: I should say. That Mrs. Graham is a remarkable woman: she's cutting her name where it will live after stone and marble crumble to dust. This is the right end of the Temperance reform."

Just then, there was a movement in the army, which hushed every voice, and chained every eye. At an order from Mr. Fletcher, the guns were placed at rest; each right hand, holding a cap, was lifted on high, and in musical measures, came the concert of young voices, repeating the words:

"I do solemnly promise, God helping me, to abstain from the use of all intoxicating liquor, including wine, beer, and cider, as a beverage, also from tobacco, in all its forms, and from all profanity."

The recitation was perfect—it came as one voice. The words cut the soft evening air with emphatic unction. The three hundred rigid forms, upturned faces, lifted hands, were prophetic. The solemn scene was one never to be forgotten. The spectators were awed, and when the hands were lowered at a signal, the guns lifted, and the column began to move, it was like the march of a regiment whose homes were behind them, whose faces were toward the foe. Horace Date was pale as death: and he turned, when the last young soldier had marched past him, feeling that there was something more than human in this Temperance movement.

Dem stood on his corner, and felt that this was the beginning of the day of judgment, unless—they could meet this power, and “nip it in the bud.” Fred Knight, Sr. stood at the door of his empty “Lamb’s Fold,” and calculated how his boy could draw them in by the influence which his office as captain of Company C. would give him. Mrs. Graham was almost bewildered with joy. It was such a realization of the beginning of her hope for the future. She had not dared expect such a response at the start of her effort. She had been prepared to work hard, and wait for results; but somehow it seemed that the coming men were just waiting for a chance to espouse the cause of the home against the saloon. She did not yet feel so deeply the immediate use of the work among the girls. It was voters that were needed to-day, and mothers of voters for the future.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE work of circulating the petitions went on. The Cold Water Army made the city pavements ring with their tread, and the political excitement ran high. The wooden guns and the petitions complicated matters for the politicians. The liquor men foresaw that the tide of popular thought was rising in favor of the suppression of their traffic, and quick to take alarm, led by Dem, with his "nipping" ideas, they began to hold secret meetings, for the purpose of effecting a combination against the "fanatics." It is needless to enter into a detailed account of these efforts upon the part of the enemy, for every hamlet has been made conversant with whiskey tactics. One thing was made very plain, however, to observant people, viz., that Rum was the power behind the entire political machine, and that the effort would be made by the wire pullers, to satisfy the aroused sentiment of the people by nominating for office, men of temperate habits and of professed hostility to the saloon as an institution, but without much knowledge of political intrigue; party men, who would refer all matters of conscience to the wisdom of party leaders, and that the parties would refuse to touch the main issue; or if com-

pelled to take note of it, would stop at an increase of the license fee. Events proved the truth of this prophecy, but as yet nothing developed excepting the fact that the issue would be between high and low license.

Public meetings were held in the interests of Prohibition, and also of the parties which divided the field. Ministers and laymen, politicians and business men, and temperance women, pronounced upon the issue from the platform.

Pastor Somerfield and his church led the high license party in Clifton, and among the young politicians, Bert Springer stood foremost, while Paul still followed, admiringly, but uncomfortably, in Bert's wake.

At a meeting, which was held by the high license people, just after the events narrated in the last chapter, and just before the convention for nominations was to be held, Bert was the speaker of the evening. In his brilliant, dashing way he talked about the necessity of driving the low doggeries to the wall, and compelling the wretched business to keep within the bounds of respectability, at least.

"Why," he said, "if we must have saloons—and we must—compel them to pay so much for the privilege of existence, that they can't afford to be anything but first-class, from the bartender down. First-class men, first-class buildings, are an ornament to the city, instead of a blotch. First-class furnishing, first-class drinks. It's the adulterated stuffs that do the mischief. I have had some little experience, and fully agree with my good pastor, that if we could

banish the vile compounds which flood the markets, and introduce, instead, the pure, light, cool wines of the east, we would settle this vexed question at once and forever."

"Bert," said Paul, as they were walking away together, after the meeting, "would you dare touch this pure, cool wine, that you referred to to-night?"

"Paul—I would dare touch anything!" cried Bert.

"Well, I wouldn't," said Paul, "and I hate to hear you say such things: it's dangerous ground, Bert, for us."

"Why for us, more than anybody? I am afraid you haven't much confidence in the profession you make, Paul."

"What profession?"

"Why, that you are a Christian."

Paul did not answer for a moment; then he said, slowly:

"I haven't much confidence in anything, Bert; things don't seem real. I don't believe that Elder Somerfield, now, believes half he preaches. Anyhow there are things that I can't reconcile."

"Now, Paul, don't croak," said Bert. "You're blue, that's what's the matter o' you. You ought to dash in, as I do, and you'd be all right. Say, what do you suppose was said to me to-day?"

"I don't know: what?"

"I was asked if I would accept the nomination for city clerk next spring."

"So? Well, they're on time: what did you say?"

"I said I would be glad to serve my city in any capacity, if called to any place within my compass of ability."

"Bert, you wouldn't run on a license ticket?"

"Of course I would."

"Against the temperance ticket? There will be one in the field."

"A temperance ticket won't stand the least show in the world. I tell you the high license boom will carry everything this year. Why, all the good men are coming in. Say, do you know Mr. William Dayton is the candidate for Senator on our ticket, and he'll carry everything before him."

"Well," said Paul, "those are some of the things that unsettle me."

"Well, they don't unsettle me. Nobody is left on the other side but old Ben Weldon, and John Mark, and Hol, and a few others, and they always were cranks, anyhow. I'm going with the winning side, I tell you. I'll be city clerk next city election, and one of these days, State Secretary—who knows?"

"Maybe you will: you're a smart fellow, Bert; but I wish we were on the other side."

"Why don't you go, then?"

"Sometimes I have a good mind to. I'd give worlds if I was as good a Christian as some of those cranks."

"Hol, for instance. Why don't you say it right out, Paul?"

"You know why; we never agree about him, and I don't like to dispute. But he was the one I meant I wish I was like him."

"Well, you always did have a soft spot, Paul. Sometimes I think I'll take you to Union Hall, and give you to them to nurse. But, on the whole, I think I'll keep you myself; I can't spare you, old boy."

"Nor I you, Bert. We've been chums a good while. I expect we'll have to stand or fall together."

They walked on in silence a moment, when Paul stopped suddenly, and said:

"Why, Bert! Then William Dayton will be against the petition in the Senate?"

"Not necessarily. He might be in favor of submitting the question to the people: but that wouldn't hurt anything. The people of this State know better than to make a law to cut off their chance of revenue from the sale of liquors, and involve themselves in an endless war. You and I know that they can't stop the sale. When you were drinking, and wanted it bad, don't you know you'd have it, law or no law? I would; and it only makes a criminal out of every drinking man in the State, to pass a law to prohibit the sale."

"They don't propose to prohibit drinking," said Paul, "but selling."

"O—'strain at a gnat and swallow a camel,'" said Bert. "It amounts to the same thing."

"It may amount to the same thing, but it is, to my mind, vastly different; and that's one other thing that shakes me, to hear men, who are known as Christians, keep up that imposition on the public, and play on the feelings of those who have neither the time nor ability to understand for themselves.

Just as though the temperance people were trying to make people 'eat and drink by note,' as Elder Somerfield put it. They don't assume any such thing; but they do assume the right of law to decide what may or may not be sold. I wish we could have the case honestly stated, at least."

"Suppose you state it, then," laughed Bert. "I'll call you out in the very next meeting."

"No, you wont; I'm not a speech-maker, but I can see things; and I tell you there is altogether too much bull-doze in it to suit me. And for men to play with such things as go to make up that petition: the prayers, the faith, the love of women, everything that goes to make life endurable in a home, is simply brutal. Now, those women have confidence that the men of this State are going to give them a fair show with this question."

"Of course they have," and Bert smiled.

"And yet, if I understand it at all, these same men—the best there are—are planning to give them a defeat at last; just leading them on; letting them work, and plod, and pray, and hope, and trust; intending to so fix it, that they shall fail, and yet come so near success, that they shall say: 'If we had only had a few more votes, if we had only worked a little harder we might have had our wish.'"

"You have a very clear understanding of the case, Paul, though an unpleasant way of putting it. We just intend to keep the power, to take care of the liquor traffic in our own way, in spite of the foolishness of women and cranks. Say, Paul, I almost believe you signed that petition."

"I did: of course. Miss Annie Dayton brought it to us."

"Well: you are softer than even I knew," said Bert, contemptuously.

"Then you refused?"

"Refused? Indeed I refused, and shall every time. I intend to vote as I pray: and until I get ready to vote for prohibition, I shall not pray the Legislature for it. You talk about consistency, my Paul: look at you. Now you fully intend to vote with me, and for me next spring, if I'm nominated, and yet sign—that."

"I know it, Bert: we are two pretty Christians, you and I: but maybe we are as good as the average. I shouldn't be a bit surprised one of these days to hear you say, 'Paul, take a drink:' in just the same tone that, when you lead a meeting, you say, 'Paul, lead us in prayer.'"

"And I expect you'd do that just as promptly as you do the other," laughed Bert.

"God forbid, Bert: but I am not sure. I have no confidence, any more, in anything."

"Poor Paul!" again laughed Bert. "I shall have to ask prayers for you."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THERE was a new order of things at Maurice Fletcher's. The interest in the Cold Water Army, its marchings and meetings, its uniforms and guns, its sashes and music, kept even Harley and June away from the old haunts; in fact, the old haunts were almost deserted. The Lamb's Fold had thrust out a sign of "Temperance Billiards:" and to all appearance had banished drink and cigarettes, as of no use; as in fact, objectionable to the improved taste of its patrons. There was nothing about billiards in the pledge the children had taken, so that, after a while, many of the uniforms could be seen hanging about the tables, and the cue was taken, and the gun left. But in spite of all this, affairs began to look up at the Fletchers, and Bessie was happy. Doubly so, when her mother began to get about the house a little, and take care of her baby.

That baby! It was no source of happiness. A skinny pimplin it was; having taken upon itself to publish to the daylight, all that could be revealed in flesh of the dark, morose, forbidding secret life of the father; and the sorrow and despair of the mother. All its tiny veins were but channels clogged, overloaded with the refuse of its father's vices, like a forest stream,

heaped with the harvest of a tornado. Its brain and nerves, its blood and skin were all sodden with the poisons in which it had been steeped. Maurice Fletcher had never seen it but once. He had never taken it in his arms, yet he often thought about it of late. It was to him like some ghoul which cast an evil spell over even his efforts to do his duty by the rest of the family. Susie was an eye-sore to him, because of her elfish ways; but this child was swathed in mystery, which grew more mysterious as days passed. At last, as his wife began to get about, and things grew more hopeful, and Bessie was kinder, he began to wonder if the baby partook in any degree of the new order of things. It ought to: it must. Anyhow he began to realize that he could not endure to feel that it was still hidden, a thing of mystery, under the blankets of his wife's bed. One evening, as he sat looking over a volume of tactics, for proof of some mooted point of army drill, he thought, suddenly:

"I will see that child." So he said to his wife, who had just come out from her room:

"Mad'line, what makes you keep that young'un in bed, eternally? No wonder it don't grow: such treatment would kill a cat."

Madeline stopped in amazement, and stood as if glued to the floor: and Bessie turned from the table where she was ironing. She just looked at her mother, and leaving the iron on the cloth came to her side.

"Here mamma:" she said, crooning, and seated her in a chair. Then going to her father, she said:

"It's time you knew about the baby, father."

"What about it?"

"It's a fool."

Fletcher recoiled as from a blow. Madeline sobbed.

"It's a fact, father. It has almost killed mother to know it. I was going to tell you soon, anyhow."

"It—can't—be."

"Well: look for yourself: or ask Doctor Rust, or Doctor Cleives—either of 'em will tell you."

"I will see." He turned the book down on the table, and got up slowly, and followed Bessie into the other room.

"I don't think it ought to lie in her bed," said Bessie, "but she wont let me take it out. I think it will kill her yet. There!"

She had laid the bed-clothes back, and moved to one side, holding the window curtain so that the light of the long summer evening fell upon the disfigured face and head.

Fletcher gave one look, and with a sudden, involuntary oath, whirled about, and staggered away.

Bessie did the best she could to keep the loathsome thing sweet, and make it look clean: but this limb of the Fletcher stalk, was worse than the little hand, that all the spices of Araby could not sweeten.

This shock to Fletcher seemed more than he could bear. He took his hat and went out. He walked up and down—out of the city and back again: and, at length, the old drink fiend clutched him by the

throat. He started at once for a saloon, to drown thought, and memory, and sensibilities.

"A man with such a thing as that tied to him, haint no business trying to keep sober," he muttered. "Sober men must think: I can't think."

He was plunging along the street when he suddenly remembered things that caused a halt. He had sworn that he would not drink.

When Harley came home, the day he was mustered into the "Army," with his gun and uniform, and he and June had consented to write their names in the family pledge, under Bessie's, Mr. Fletcher had again promised, for their sakes, that if the time ever came that he was tempted to drink, he would come to his wife and home for protection. A few days of abstinence had taught him that he might need it. This came now to mind.

"I never intend to go back on my word," he muttered. "Anyhow, I mustn't fool Madeline by going off and getting drunk, without her knowing it. I'll go and tell her first."

He turned, and went rapidly home. The long evening had passed. They would be in bed, but so much the better. She could stand it better in bed.

But she was not in bed. His sudden leaving, under the circumstances, made rest impossible. Madeline was in her room with the little unfortunate, on her knees. He came in impetuously, and cried:

"It's no use, Madeline."

She looked up.

"I told you I'd come and tell you first, and so here I am. Where's that book?"

He sprang to the shelf and took the Bible down, found the place, and seemed about to tear the leaf to scraps: but the sight of the other names held him an instant. Madeline's face was ghastly. She reached out and caught his hand, and held it with all her strength.

"It says forever, Maurice."

"It says—O, yes—it says—and I said—but I tell you I can't. I'm too far gone: and that," pointing to the baby, "is too much—too much. I know what you'll say. I know what 'll happen at the factory—and—O—those three hundred guns—but, Mad'line, only for the promise I made you and the children I'd 'a been drunk and forgotten it all by this time. And 'taint every man, dyin' for a drink in which to drown such a thing, that would 'a come past ten saloons to take his pledge back of his wife before he broke it. I'm a better man than I used to be, Mad'line, or I wouldn't ha' thought of it. So now—there, let me go."

He drew on his hand, but she held it.

"Maurice, I appreciate it—I do—and, Maurice, I love you."

He stopped struggling, and stood perfectly still. After a moment, in which her eyes shone up into his, she said:

"I know you've suffered, Maurice, but—"

"Suffered!" he cried. "Mad'line, you don't know—I've walked and walked, and said: 'I wont, I wont—I'll die first—I'll be a man and carry my end of the load,' but that's easier said 'n done."

"Yes, I know, dear—dear, darling Maurice, I

know—but—O—don't drink! I'll get you something, anything. I'd go through fire, I'd walk on burning coals, I'd give you my blood, if it would help you. I'll keep it where you'll never see it, or know of it. O, can't you be willing to suffer a little longer, and keep sober and at work for us? It and I shall not be here long. If I could, I'd take it and go now; but that wouldn't be right, you know. Tears! tears! O, I've tried to cure it with tears. I'd give it all I ever was—the little girl you once said you loved—I'd give it all the beauty and brightness she ever had, if I could."

So she pleaded, her pale, hollow cheeks and brilliant eyes, and the grasp of her hand all pleading and clinging to him.

"Mad'line," he said, drawing again on her hand, "I'll tell you what—I will—I will—I won't get drunk. I'll just get one little drink: I'll have to have that now, for my blood is up, and boiling, drying me to cinders. I don't care so much about that, after all. I guess, I'll do my duty by it and you; yes, I will. I ain't quite so mean as I made out, but I must have a drink; so there, let go! I don't want to pull you and it on the floor: let go, I say! Do you suppose I'm going to get drunk again, after all that's passed? No sir! Don't look so, Mad'line. I'm all right. I must ha' been a fool, to rush in, and tear 'round, and frighten you so. There now!"

He gave his hand a jerk, and her slender grip broke. He turned quickly to go out, and confronted Bessie: she was standing at the door.

"I was a fool!" he muttered.

"What's up?" demanded Bessie. "Mamma, what's he doing to you? what's this book here for?" and she picked up the Bible that had fallen to the floor.

"Means that I ain't a free man in my own house," he replied, doggedly.

"What do you want to be free to do?" asked Bessie.

"Free to do? Why anything I choose."

"What do you choose that you are not free to do?"

He settled sullenly against the edge of the door, holding the knob in his hand.

"I choose to be let alone."

"Do you, really? Well, it's too late for that with all us about. What's the matter with you? you act as if you'd been drinking."

"Who dares say such a thing? who dares to intimate it?" he cried, straightening, "whichever does, lies! for I haint drank a drop."

"Nobody has said it, that I know of: but you act like it."

"Well, I haint. But I tell you, Bess, and you, Mad'line, that if I can't have peace in my own house, I will drink."

"Now, father, you are wild. I don't understand why you act this way, unless it's about the poor little baby. But why should you punish us? Haven't mamma and I done our duty by it? And haven't we made things just as nice as we could, ever since you signed that, and we had any money to do with? I'd be ashamed if I was a big man like you, to say

such things, to make a poor little woman, like my mother, die. You have been so good, and we have been so happy all these weeks. You must not hurt her this way, she has suffered too much."

"Suffered! You don't count that I've suffered! Suffer! There now, I tell you I've got to have a drink: get out o' my way."

"You, Maurice Fletcher! who gave his word of honor, to Harley and us all: and the whole Cold Water Army? There now, look at mamma."

He had seen, and sprang and seized the child, and took it in his hands. Madeline had risen, and lifted the baby by its long clothes, and holding it out, head down, like a club, was, apparently about to dash it against the wall, while the awful look of madness had settled over all the delicate features.

Fletcher sprang, and caught the child from her hand.

"Are you mad?" he cried, "would you kill it?"

"Yes:" she said, letting her empty hands drop listless at her side, while she glared at the baby, and ground her teeth.

"O, she's gone mad at last, poor dear, dear mamma! Now you may go; you man; your work is done: go!"

He said nothing in reply, looking at his wife, who did not move, but stood rigid before him, and a great change swept through him. This new and appalling disaster completely tamed and humanized him. The husband and father within, that had been struggling to life for weeks, suddenly stepped out of the fire and smoke of passion and selfishness,

and arose to the emergency. His wife stood staring at him and the babe. He lifted the repulsive form of the child to his face, laid his cheek upon it, then kissed it, and burst into tears.

"Poor, sick baby," he said, "we must see what we can all do for it: and poor tired mother. Mad'line—you said you loved me a little while ago. O—I don't deserve it: but I do love you dear, I do; I've been a brute—I am; but help me; and Mad'line, pray for me."

"Pray?" she said, without moving a limb, still glaring at the child.

"Yes—pray—you have prayed for me a great many times, haven't you?"

"Yes:" still standing rigid, but now looking at him.

"Well, then pray for me now; then we'll put the baby to bed, and rest."

"Rest?"

"Yes, rest."

He came to her: put his arm around her: held the baby before her: and bent down and kissed it again. Then, for the first time in years, kissed her with tender, clinging lips, which expressed the sudden alarm of his heart—for it would be a loss to lose her, after all. Her only response was a sinking down and away from him. He threw out one arm to save her from falling, and reaching out the other with the baby on it, toward Bessie, he said:

"Bessie, will you take the baby?"

She obeyed without a word.

He lifted his wife, passive, unresponsive as a dead

woman ; and sitting down with her on his knees, laid her drooping head on his breast ; pressed her pale cheek with his hands, kissed her, and tried with all the dumb show of tenderness, as well as by words, to win her back. But his indifference, and neglect, and cruelty, had lasted a day too long. This last shock of sorrow and shame had been too great. She lay looking steadily before her for a few seconds, then straightened herself back against his breast, and gasped :

“ I'll pray.”

Her eyelids drooped.

He bowed his head reverently, and waited, listening for her prayer : but it had ended. There was nothing more—nothing to answer him but silent, cold, dumb clay.

* * * * *

That same night, the house at Elmwood Farm was brilliantly lighted, and many guests, who had been bidden from among rich and poor of the temperance folk, came through the long avenue of elms, to the wedding, that Uncle Benjamin and Aunt Gracia gave to Annie Dayton and Hollis Ellenwood. John Mark was best man. The bride came in alone, with little Clementine Graham carrying her fan and bouquet.

The solemn words were spoken, and they stood to receive the congratulations of friends. In the midst of the words of good cheer, Pastor Wadelle, who had seemed to be laden to the water's edge all the evening, stepped forward, with a paper in his hand, which he had just taken from his breast-pocket, and said :

"I have the honor to be the bearer to you, Mr. Ellenwood, on this happy occasion, of a dispatch, which will convey to you some idea of the appreciation in which you are held by your fellow-citizens. It is fitting that this exalted recognition of your worth should be made at this time, when you shall not be left to carry all your honors alone. I have the happiness to announce to you your nomination in the Convention to-day to the office of Representative of the ninth district; and this nomination by the dominant party is equivalent to an election. Allow me to present you with the official announcement, and my own hearty endorsement, and I pledge you my support at the ballot-box."

The good man extended the dispatch in one hand while he gave Hollis the other, and his whole face beamed with the unction of good-fellowship and genuine delight.

A breathless hush fell, but it was only as the lull before the storm, for immediately there was a clapping of gloved hands and fluttering of handkerchiefs.

William Dayton came quickly across the room, and slapping Hollis on the shoulder, said :

"We will make our canvass in company. Hi! old fellow."

Only a few faces were grave, only a few hands had not applauded.

Uncle Benjamin, Aunt Gracia, Aunt Hittie and Mrs. Graham sat silent, while John Mark stood rigid, solemn, almost as though the wedding had suddenly been interrupted by a funeral ; but of these all, none

were so silent and grave as Hollis and his bride. Just as the applause was fairly rounding out, Hollis seemed to arouse himself, and was just lifting his hand to check it, as William Dayton addressed him.

Then his check flushed, and his lips set stolidly. He turned one quick searching look upon Annie; she answered him in a language that brought a smile to his lips, and a flash to his eyes. He turned to the reverend messenger, who was waiting, still holding his hand—still extending the dispatch, and said :

“ I thank you, good friend, and all who would wish me well, and give me work to do : but is there a man in this city, who really doubts where I stand on these questions of the day ? It must be that I have not been as much of a man among you as I had hoped. I shall never allow a ballot to be cast for me for any office, unless I am accepted as Christ would be, if He were in my place—until every such ballot should be like a bullet sent home to the very life of legalized wrong—until from the first caucus, all the way down to the last vote, there is recognition of Him whom we profess to represent. Let me ask you, does the power behind this nomination propose to kill Rum ? No—no—only to give it a higher prerogative for a higher license fee. Tell me, would Christ—Aunt Gracia—you who taught me the lesson—would Christ run on this ticket if He were here as a citizen, or would, you, Pastor Wadelle, vote for me, if I should accept this nomination with the declarations which must be taken with it ? I do not so learn Him. I thank you, but I cannot accept

the nomination. I would have made this statement privately, if I had been allowed to do so, but it is, perhaps, right that I should be allowed to declare myself, once for all."

The effect of these words was tremendous. William Dayton, at the first tone which revealed the purpose of the man, drew back from him a little, lifted himself proudly, folded his arms, and stood. But as Hollis went on, he bowed his head thoughtfully, and as he concluded, he settled back a little against the wall, while his arms fell a little from the proud, firm clasp over his breast.

A painful hush fell over all. John Mark still stood rigid. Mr. Wadelle took a step backward, dropped his head a moment, then lifted it with a quick motion, while his brows seemed to broaden, and his eyes to enlarge as if for a new outlook, and his mobile face alive, and speaking, seemed to say, as it turned toward Hollis:

"What—have we such a man among us, and we knew it not? We may be courageous, after all."

Aunt Hittie had a look as if the day's work had all turned out well—the baking just of the right shade of brown, bottom and top. Hortense Graham was like one who heard the strains of the doxology floating out over the battle-field from the front, and took it for the note of victory. Uncle Benjamin and Aunt Gracia still sat waiting and looking, as all the rest began to do, at Annie.

And Annie, laying her hand upon her husband's arm, turned upon him the glorious beauty of her face, in it that uplifted look, that solar light, which

those who have sown to the flesh, never, never wear.

Just an instant she looked up into his face—but long enough for him to recognize the good gift of strength and courage which God had given him in his wife, and to realize something of what it would have been for him to have disappointed her proud confidence in him. Then turning to the company, she said :

“ Had I not believed that Hollis Ellenwood was true enough to resist even a temptation like this, I would never have made the promise I have made to-night. William ! ” She paused suddenly. Her lips quivered and her eyes filled.

William Dayton looked up at her, then dropped his eyes, and stood like one condemned. There was breathless waiting for the unfinished words, but she could not speak them. There were, however, none who did not read in her eloquent face at least a hint of that which she would have said, had she spoken. John Mark was radiant, and broke the spell of painful silence by clapping his hands, and crying out :

“ Good for you, Annie Ellenwood ! ”

It was the first time the new name had been spoken aloud, and a bright flush as of the sunrise on a summer sky, spread over her cheek, and she answered :

“ True, John Mark, and I appreciate the good for me. And I hope for equal good to thousands who lack it to-day, because of a licensed liquor traffic. I want to say just one thing to you all. The day is coming—a good day if true men live in it—a dark, sad day if cowardice and selfishness still rule—when

it shall be settled whether this good that comes to me shall bless other new homes or not. But I believe in the power of truth; and you, William, with John Mark, and many others—a whole majority, shall be sent to represent the clean ballots of the New Dispensation.”

Annt Gracia opened her lips, as if to speak, but a thin, boyish voice was already chiming like a morning bell upon their ears.

Philip, just at Hollis’ knees, crowded close to him by the throng behind, said :

“ Say, Uncle Hollis, in ten years we boys ’ll vote for you and prohibition.”

“ For, say,” piped up Benny, “ their guns are ballots, Uncle Hollis—you know. I can’t vote then, but I’ll be there to boost.”

Philip and Benny : Prophets of the Afterward which waited upon this BEFOREHAND.





